

# **Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan**

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The mountains of Sulaymaniya.

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## Map of Iraqi Kurdistan



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## I.

# INTRODUCTION

### *1.1. Main Focus*

Iraqi Kurdistan is strategically located in the nexus of strong regional powers of the Middle East. Throughout its history it has been the battlefield of major violent conflicts, and during the past decades this society has experienced gross human rights violations, internal war, major refugee flows, and a persistent scarcity of resources. Lately, Iraqi Kurdistan has seen developments of social and economic rehabilitation. However, there is little research on the effects of these past conflicts upon society and the current consequences of conflicts for peoples' lives. Therefore I find it of interest to explore what needs are expressed by people at the grass-root level in Iraqi Kurdistan. By approaching the needs of society from a peacebuilding perspective, effects of conflict on society are highlighted. The enterprise of peacebuilding as it is unfolded today in war torn societies, includes a variety of actors. The presence of United Nations agencies and numerous international organizations is common, since peacebuilding is closely linked to the enterprise of international development aid. However, in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan the presence of the international community is less visible, due to a complex security situation. Still, efforts for peacebuilding are carried out by local actors, in cooperation with international organizations. Ultimately, peacebuilding concerns the lives of local people as they are affected by social structures institutionalised by conflict.

As such, the focus of this thesis is civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan, since their work aim for rehabilitation of society, address basic human needs, and are conducted on the grass-root level. I pose the question of what are the main objectives of civil society actors, and what obstacles do they face in their work? Is it the past experiences of violence and atrocities from the former regime? Or is it economic and social structures that war has institutionalised, through which people meet obstacles in their daily lives? Maybe these structures were always existent in peoples' lives, but the war

exacerbated the structures? Has this resulted in incentives for activism and windows of opportunity for change? And how do these issues relate to peacebuilding?

### *1.2. Research Questions*

The research questions that lead the research of this thesis are:

*What are the main objectives of people within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan?*

*What obstacles are civil society actors facing in their work?*

*To what degree can it be argued that they have peacebuilding as their goal?’*

These questions were formulated with the aim of finding data that could illuminate the experiences of people in Iraqi Kurdistan. This data could point to issues that require attention within a strategy of peacebuilding that is founded in the specific context of Iraqi Kurdistan. Furthermore, the research questions enabled me to limit the focus to persons involved in civil society who's vocation is development projects aiming at rehabilitation of society and peacebuilding. This was of importance since peacebuilding theories argue that grass-root peacebuilding occurs at the civil society level (Orjuela, 2004). Moreover, peacebuilding at the local level can be argued to be a precondition for the success of peace accords brokered on elite levels, since rehabilitation of society, which is made by people rebuilding themselves and society, is necessary as a base to build peace upon (Nordstrom, 2004: 184). According to the proponents of basic needs theory within the field of conflict resolution (Burton, 1990; Azar, 1990) conflicts entail non-material human values and needs, and emphasis is put upon the question of deprived satisfaction with acceptance, access, and security needs as prime source of conflict. Hence, from a conflict resolution perspective, the issues of human needs are required to be addressed within a peacebuilding strategy. I find this argument useful for establishing insight to the context of peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The methodological approach for the study is qualitative and explorative in character. By conducting field research in Iraqi Kurdistan, primary sources from qualitative interviews and participant observation were gathered. Returning from the field research, secondary sources, such as academic literature, policy papers, and news reports were consulted. The primary data from Iraqi Kurdistan is approached through firstly, a critical discussion of the concepts of civil society and peacebuilding, presented within the theoretical framework of this thesis. Secondly, through analysis and description of the empirical data perceived from the outset of the theoretical framework. The academic literature draws upon approaches from conflict resolution theory, social anthropology, political science and sociology. As such, this study is truly interdisciplinary in character. However, the justification of this is that the aim of this thesis is to provide an in-depth understanding of current developments within Iraqi Kurdistan, that could highlight both micro- and macro perspectives of civil society actors and peacebuilding. Since previous research on the topics of both peacebuilding and civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan is limited, I have chosen theoretical approaches that I believe are of help for illuminating and explaining these concepts in regards to the specific context of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The field research was carried out during November 2005 in the northern part of Iraq, with the development organization Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in the city of Sulaymaniya. In addition there were visits and interviews with local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs), and shorter fieldtrips to other parts of Iraqi Kurdistan during the stay. Due to the ongoing conflict, the thesis is limited to regard civil society and peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, the author acknowledges that an investigation concerning peacebuilding within entire Iraq would address further subject matters than those attended to in this thesis.

### *1.3. Positioning of Core Concepts*

I apply the notion of civil society to describe the actors I met in Iraqi Kurdistan, who were actively taking part in projects aiming at rehabilitation of society. Although this

is a concept whose analytical validity is highly contested, the view presented in this thesis is that civil society entails more actors than formally organised NGOs. Those actors that I include in the notion of civil society are (besides groups of high formal organization, such as the NGOs) actors that are not organized yet actively taking part in projects for peacebuilding. These actors are professional groups such as teachers and students, and traditionally organized groups such as clans.

My impression is that within the NGOs I met, there is identification with the concept of civil society and an objective of advocacy. The notion of civil society is described as ‘good to act with’ by Lewis (2001:11), which is explanatory for using the term to describe activism for social change. Furthermore, the notion of civil society, as explained to me by the actors in Iraqi Kurdistan, also illustrates their experiences with the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan. Therefore I have chosen to use the concept of civil society in this paper, to highlight that people within these organizations identify with it, as well as applying it as a sensitising concept on my empirical data, and lastly for describing relations between social actors in the post-conflict society of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The two political parties Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) govern the geographic area indicated by the name Iraqi Kurdistan. As such they represent the authorities<sup>1</sup> for the informants of my research, hence referring to the ‘authorities’ throughout the thesis indicate the KDP and the PUK. Their power is based upon tribal loyalties for a certain extent, yet their power is also consolidated by the legacy of being the Iraqi Kurdish political opposition movements and ‘freedom fighters’. Additionally, the argument put forward in this thesis is that they have the organizational structures to impose their order on society, which stem from an institutionalisation of patron-client relationships, and control over resources. This can to a certain extent be explained by Harvey (1998: 208) who argues that armed conflict results in an extreme process of disengagement of civil society, which leads to

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to the Iraqi regime before 2003, I interchangeably use ‘the former regime’, ‘the Baath Party / Baath regime’ or ‘Saddam Hussein’s rule / regime’. Saddam Hussein was the President of Iraq between 1979 until 2003.



a fallback on primary groupings, for example kinship and tribal political structures, that serve as coping strategies for people. Conversely, one motivational factor for civil society activism in Iraqi Kurdistan is resentment towards the rule of the parties because of their “*corruption*”, “*inability to provide services*” and “*power struggles between themselves*” (comments from interviewees).

A brief point about the concepts used throughout this thesis regard the meaning when referring to ethnicity, clan, tribe, and communal identity. An explanation is provided following from Ferguson (2003: 19) who describe firstly, “*ethnie*” as signifying a people who are perceived as being culturally distinctive by themselves and others, independent from any political organization. Culturally indicates that they have a specific way of life. Ethnic identity is socially constructed, and the result of historical processes between groups of different “*ethnies*”. It can be instrumentally used for obtaining material and political advantages, which in conflict situations tend to become salient. Secondly, a “*clan*” is a wide form of social organization, which is founded on constructed descent, and can act as basis for political organization, yet does not have to do so. Thirdly, “*tribe*” is a polity, which refer to a political organization uniting different local groups. Finally, communal identity is an expression that Azar (1990: 7) defines as a generic term, which enhance politicised groups where the members share ethnic, religious, and linguistic, or other cultural identity characteristics.

Finally, the focus of this thesis is positioned in the geographical area of Iraqi Kurdistan. I acknowledge that Iraqi Kurdistan is, to some, a highly politicised expression. I do not intend to forward separatist claims by using this name, neither to interpret this further. However, I employ the name because this is what my informants use when referring to the society in which they live. Iraqi Kurdistan is a name used in official documents, such as passports, and is further commonly used by major news agencies, such as Reuters, and within academic literature.

*I.4. Outline of Thesis*

The first chapter concerns the methodological approaches I apply in my study of civil society and peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan. The second chapter describes the researcher's positioning in the field, and the history of Iraqi Kurdistan. Through my journey along the ancient Silk Road until my arrival in Sulaymaniya, together with antecedents of the area, the present state in Iraqi Kurdistan is portrayed.

This is followed by a third chapter, which provides the theoretical framework of this thesis. A discussion of the concepts of war and peace introduces Edward Azar's theory on Protracted Social Conflicts. The theory is presented for establishing a foundation for understanding conflict dynamics, in addition to be employed for analysis of the empirical data. Further, a definition of peacebuilding is provided and linked to the case of contemporary Iraq. Some prerequisites for peacebuilding, such as 'political will', are debated.

In the fourth chapter the focus is turned towards explanations of the concepts of civil society in peacebuilding. The critique of the notion of civil society is followed by a debate on the analytical usefulness of the concept. Effects of conflict upon civil society are described, and related to the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. The fifth chapter concern the case study of Iraqi Kurdistan, and presents a debate of the empirical data from the outset of the theoretical framework

The final chapter provides answers to the research questions. The main findings are presented, and concluding remarks provide suggestions for further research.

## II.

### METHODOLOGY

I returned to Oslo from five weeks of field research in Iraqi Kurdistan, in mid December 2005. Coming home, my thoughts went to Clifford Geertz (1973) prominent theory on ‘The interpretation of cultures’. Geertz (1973: 5-10) describes the ethnographer’s accomplishment as reading a manuscript which is written by shaped behaviour. The work of the ethnographer is to go beyond what the eye observes and grasp the meaning of human behaviour and interpret it in a ‘thick description’, to see behaviour as symbolic action where the question the ethnographer should ask is ‘what does it say?’ To grasp the meaning then is to realize that interpretation is constructed descriptions of what we believe “...our informants are up to, or think they are up to, and then systemize those” (1973: 15). With the idea of ‘thick description’ in the back of my mind, I provide an explanation of how my research methodology was structured, and how I reached the interpretations that are at the foundation of this thesis.

#### *II.1. Qualitative Research*

This thesis is based on research methods commonly described as qualitative. Qualitative theory building is different from the positivist approach in the sense that a qualitative approach aims at finding rich data that can describe a setting or phenomenon. Hence theory building is conducted step by step, by the data acquired from qualitative interviews and participant observation. Theories thus materialize from interviews, by changing and modifying the questions as the researcher goes along, and explores the underlying *building block ideas* and *themes* that clarify the culture and why events take place. To be able to see something new one has to ground the emerging theory in the experiences of one’s interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 56-63).

## *II.2. Case Study*

The empirical data acquired for this thesis was collected during five weeks in Iraqi Kurdistan, in November 2005. Since the time in the field was rather short, which thus limited the amount of empirical data, the apt term of the research is *case study*. Robson explains the case study as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (1993: 146). One way of differentiating the case study from ethnographic research is the difference in particularity of time. Ethnographic research is often conducted over a longer period of time in the field, and aims at producing general sayings. While the case study is aiming at producing data on a limited time in the field, a limited time period, and a limited case. The aim of a case study is to give a detailed presentation of empirical data relating to some sequences of events from which the analyst seeks to make some theoretical inference. The inference from case studies is based upon analytical induction (Mitchell, 1988: 237-238).

Induction can be explained as the use of evidence to formulate or reformulate general ideas. The process of induction starts with evidence and assesses its implications for general ideas (Ragin, 1994: 15). When analysing the empirical data I sought out the building block ideas and themes which enabled me to gather information from various actors and situations in Iraqi Kurdistan, and interpret this. Following from the holistic nature of qualitative research, I rely upon secondary sources for reaching a ‘thicker’ understanding of the empirical data, through the process of analytical induction. The theoretical framework draws upon academic literature from various disciplines on the topics of civil society and peacebuilding. Furthermore, academic literature on Iraqi Kurdistan is still rather limited. Since my language skills limit me to English sources I have applied those secondary sources of relevance that I have been able to find.

## *II.3. Research Question*

Owing to my interest in finding out what peacebuilding would involve for ordinary people in Iraqi Kurdistan, with the backdrop of the ongoing conflict, as well as legacy of earlier wars and authoritarian regimes, I started to examine how this could be

developed into a research question. As a theoretical basis the concepts of peacebuilding and civil society were initial “sensitising concepts”<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, reviewing peacebuilding literature I could not find an academic study with a people centred approach to peacebuilding based on empirical research from Iraq. The lack of earlier researches upon this topic, the ongoing war, and the consequences a protraction this conflict may have for the regional stability, convinced me that the topic of my research was important.

The arena where peacebuilding involves ordinary people taking active part in working for peace is stated to be within civil society. Civil society is commonly connected to grass-root peacebuilding, and therefore I turned my focus towards how civil society was represented within peacebuilding. I found it common within policy papers referring to ‘on the ground’ experience, that civil society in peacebuilding meant the work of NGOs, international, and local, in conflict and post-conflict situations (see Utenriksdepartementet, 2004: 25-26).

Therefore I contacted the Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) representative in Iraqi Kurdistan. After reviewing their projects we agreed that I should come for a field visit to them. At this time I had developed a working research strategy, posing the questions:

*What are the main objectives of people within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan?*

*What obstacles are civil society actors facing in their work?*

*To what degree can it be argued that they have peacebuilding as their goal?*

The nature of qualitative theory building places limits upon how tightly pre-structured your research can be before getting out in the field, to find out what is taking place. I

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<sup>2</sup> Ragin (1994: 87-88) points at the initiation of a qualitative study, arguing that it requires some idea of why and how to study a subject. These initial ideas are drawn from current theoretical ideas, and form “sensitising concepts” that guide the research.

prepared myself before entering the field by consulting secondary sources, such as academic literature of the historical and political context of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. In addition I studied theory on peacebuilding and civil society, which is presented within the theoretical framework of this thesis. I also closely followed events reported in media. However, I remained open in designing research questions because I did not know whom I would get access to before I arrived in the field. I was also unsure of what the ongoing conflict would imply for my research. I elaborate upon these impediments in chapter II.6.

### *II.4. Data*

I collected the empirical data by using techniques that are commonly used in case studies, such as by participant observation. Through this I took part in the events I studied. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with sixteen individuals. The interviews were both open-ended, that is interviews with no pre-specified order or set of questions, and focused with specified key topics but not a fixed order of questions (Robson 1993:159). Four out of the sixteen interviewees I met almost on a daily basis, and had more than one interview with. Of these four individuals three of them were at the NPA, and one at a LNGO, in Sulaymaniya. All but one were local employees, of which the one was from Norway. Of the sixteen interviewees four were employees at NPA in Sulaymaniya. Six were employees at four different LNGOs of which three were based in Sulaymaniya and one in Arbil. Two interviewees were teachers, two were internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kerkuk, and one was Director of the Kurdistan Strategic Studies Centre in Sulaymaniya. All interviewees were adults between the age rate of thirty and fifty years old. Only two of the interviewees were women and the rest were men. Apart from the students and the IDPs, the social status of the interviewees can be classified as middle to upper middle class, urban and educated. The issue of social status I believe is of importance for participation in NGOs in Iraqi Kurdistan, and is further debated upon in the theory chapter.

Additionally I participated in the classroom during two human rights lectures in schools in Sulaymaniya and Halabja. Before these lectures I interviewed the human

rights teachers. After the classes I spoke to the students in these classes. The students in Sulaymaniya were between nine and twelve years old, both boys and girls. In the human rights class in Halabja the students were fifteen and sixteen years old, and only boys. The interviews at the schools were open-ended, both with the teachers and the students. The questions I asked relates to what they knew about human rights, how their daily lives connected with human rights, and what they thought about peace. However, the interviews did mostly develop as conversations, where I let the interviewees lead the conversation.

This was also true for the majority of all the interviews conducted. Within the first interviews I put emphasis on asking what were the reasons for the person to organize in civil society, what issues are of importance for that particular NGO, and how they arrange their work. After two weeks I had grasped some issues that were mentioned frequently, such as the political situation in Iraqi Kurdistan and the lack of basic resources, such as water and electricity. Thus my questions changed with the more information I gathered. In addition to the earlier questions I did then ask about the relationship between civil society and the authorities, and what peacebuilding could signify in Iraqi Kurdistan. After all, I visited the NPA office in the weekdays during daytime and spoke to the people who worked there. Living with a Kurdish family gave me insight to the daily life in Sulaymaniya and the society of Iraqi Kurdistan at large, thus while I participated in different contexts I made notes of events I believed was of interest for my research.

Regardless of how empirical data is acquired, research in itself aims at scientific standards. These the researcher has in mind when conducting research on a specific topic for the data gathered to be presented in a truthful way. The following chapters concern some of these standards, such as generalization of data, the implications of violent conflict upon research, and the issue of bias in research.

### *II.5. Generalization*

For satisfying the objective of generalizing the results of the research, the researcher should test the themes of study as a part of the iterative research design. Hence, firstly, the two principles of *completeness* and *saturation point* require fulfilment. The former principle indicates that the researcher conducts interviews until an overall sense of the topic is provided. The latter indicates the researcher to continue interviewing upon a theme until there is little new learned from subsequent interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 72-73). According to my stay in the field I reached an overall understanding of the topic of my study, i.e. the principle of *completeness* was fulfilled. However, I cannot say that I would not learn more from additional interviews. Thus the point of *saturation* was not fulfilled.

Secondly, how far the results of research can be generalized is suggested by sampling for *similarity* and *dissimilarity*. By interviewing employees at LNGOs in Iraqi Kurdistan, other than the NPA, who were involved in similar and sometimes the same projects as NPA. I found that the information I gathered about the main objectives of people working in civil society and how this could relate to peacebuilding, could be generalized beyond the location of the NPA. Thus, on the basis of *similarity*, the information holds for broader generalization. Yet, for a thorough testing of generalization, the research would be strengthened by testing for *dissimilarity* (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 74-76). One example of this with reference to my study would be if I had been able to conduct interviews with persons organized in civil society in other societies experiencing conflict, I could test if similar answers to my questions would appear within a dissimilar context. If this was the case I would be able to claim with confidence that my information holds broad generalization. However, I was unable to accomplish this foremost because of the short time in the field and the limited size of this thesis.

### *II.6. Research in Situations of Conflict*

My research strategy for gathering empirical data was formed by several reasons. Conducting research in areas of conflict puts limits upon how to gather data and what



data the researcher gets access to. My research strategy encountered limitations by the ongoing conflict situation within Iraq. It is made clear by researchers that methodological choices available for the researcher in socio political conflicts are constrained by the possibility for implementation and execution in the field (see Barakat et, al., 2002; Lee, 1995). The specific context in which fieldwork is conducted requires different research strategies, hence Barakat et. al. (2002: 993) claim that situations of conflict implies unpredicted constrains for research. The issue of security was an unpredictable obstacle for my possibility to move freely and get access to locations I had an interest of visiting.

One example of this concerns the subject of *access*, and how one needs to modify ones' research underway. Before and during my stay I was very eager to make a field visit to the sites of the 'peace promotion' project that NPA facilitates, which concerns enhancing dialogue between ethnic and religious groups. However, the security situation prevented me from visiting this project where it was currently taking place in the city of Kerkuk. Instead I tried to arrange a fieldtrip to Hawraman where this project had been started, although the project was ended at this time, I thought it could be interesting to speak to the former participants about their experiences. Foremost, in this area the security was good enough for me to visit. However, after many vague answers one of the LNGO staff told me "*in Hawraman the participants of the project are all farmers and because they do not have mobiles and they are out on the fields we cannot go there, because we will not be able to find anyone to talk to*". I believe the real reason for not taking me there was lack of interest. At that time all NGOs I had contacted regarding this project were busy with the upcoming elections, and a master student from a university in Norway did not interest them enough for spending one day of travel to Hawraman.

This example illustrates how my access to information was shaped by the security situation, and by people's readiness to introduce me to the locals. In conflict situations the risk of bias is particularly high (Barakat et. al., 2002: 993-994). As the example illustrated, the security situation was due to the conflict situation. Additionally, the

reluctance of some informants to present me to local participants of this project might also be related to the conflict. It may possibly be that the conflict between communal groups in Hawraman is still heightened, and the facilitators of the project did not wish to inform me of this. From this point of view, the risk of bias is recognized. However, the issue of bias in research is further presented in the subsequent chapter.

Hence, the information I received and understood from observation was shaped by the project I was allowed to join. On my first day at the NPA in Sulaymaniya I was introduced to a person who was to act as coordinator for my stay. This person is the human rights desk manager at NPA. Thus it happened that my time was spent visiting the human rights education project, which again has shaped the empirical data.

### *II.7. Bias*

Because every slice of social life involves an unlimited array of evidence, the researcher must be selective. The researcher needs some types of sensitising concepts or ideas for selection of what is a potential research question. Selectivity offers a problem though; the process of selection involves ignorance on behalf of other points of views on the subject matter. Ignoring evidence is not always intentional, it can be a result of a researcher unidentified bias (Ragin, 1994: 67). Because of the subjective and experiential nature of fieldwork, the question whether there is an objective authenticity behind the researcher's interpretation of people and cultures studied and presented in the research becomes significant. To what extent is the research coloured by the researchers bias? The dimension of lived experience inherent in fieldwork complicates the aspect of bias in research; that is bias both on behalf of the researcher, and the informants.

#### II.7.1. Bias in data

For the data I collected the risk of bias rests firstly in my position in the field; I stayed for the most part with one organization. Additionally, how well this location gave me accurate understanding of the society is questionable. Although the employees at the NPA office in Sulaymaniya are all local, except from the resident representative who

is expatriate from Norway, the organization and structure is still foreign to Iraq. Secondly, I conducted some of my interviews with an interpreter who was an employee at NPA, and the reason for this was my lacking knowledge of the Kurdish language. Consequently, to work with an interpreter implies risk for being *culturally misled*. Not because the interpreter wants to mislead you, but because the interpreter is a culture-representative (or unrepresentative) mediator trying to carry out new tasks for the researcher (Tonkin, 1988: 186). I was able to speak in English, and sometimes in Turkish and Swedish with most of my informants, thus I believe I have obtained a first hand understanding of the data.

Yet, my short duration limited my chances for establishing a network and learning how to go about to get access to groups and locations that would be of interest for my research. My interpreter facilitated my stay with the NPA in Kurdistan, and was of great help for my visits to several different places, organizations and people. Although, at this point the risk of bias from the informants, including the interpreter, can indicate distortion and the cover-up of information they might not have wanted to tell me (intentionally or unintentionally). The implication of bias is a threat to the validity of the research. Validity is the indication that a measure is measuring what it is intended to measure (Ragin, 1994: 21).

#### II.7.2. Bias of the researcher

My own bias involves me not being from the same cultural background as the community I encountered during my stay in the field. However, due to the fact that one of my parents is Kurd from Turkey gives me a sense of familiarity with the cultural context of Iraqi Kurdistan. This can make me unaware of structures within the Kurdish society that I might take for granted. On the other hand, it might reduce the risk of cultural bias in the interpretation. My family background made some informants in Iraqi Kurdistan to identify me as “one of us”. However, most of the times it was clear that I was not “one of them”. Furthermore, I believe myself unintentionally take for granted the freedom I enjoy as a woman in a Western society, contrary to the limited freedom many women in Kurdistan have. Being a university

student who is able to travel there where most people do not have a passport or money, and many have gone through the hardships of trying to get to Europe along the smugglers trails, gave me a feeling of privilege, an unpleasant feeling of the unjustness of the world. Hence, the interpretation of what causes people in Iraqi Kurdistan civil society work towards, and the answers I received from my informants stand the risk of bias in the interpretation because of difference in cultural background.

#### *II.8. Transparency, Consistence-Coherence and Communicability*

Within a qualitative approach, the question of *validity* of the research can be assessed by the concepts of transparency, consistency-coherence and communicability. *Transparency* requires that the reader is able to see the basic process of data collection. *Consistence-coherence* is the extent to which a researcher shows that he/she checked out ideas and responses that seemed inconsistent, and offered explanations why contradictions in themes occurred. Lastly, *communicability* indicates that the final research is feeling real to the readers and to the research arena where it is presented (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 85-91).

Following from the guidelines above, I try to balance the information I received. I conferred topics with several informants to get a variety of views, so to perceive a variety of perceptions on the topics of my study. To balance the interpretation of the information I compare the data to secondary material, such as academic literature on the topics. I also regard the context, within which I gained specific information, to be able to discover probable bias. However, my justification of why I chose to visit the NPA was to explore how an INGO operates within Iraq. Furthermore, I believe that the employees at the NPA office in Sulaymaniya could provide answers to my research question, as they are local people that have voluntarily organized themselves in civil society. Furthermore they work with development projects that address needs expressed within their society.

Due to the limitations on my stay in the field my claim is that the empirical data collected for this thesis cannot be perceived as complete for theory building. Rather,

the argument advanced is that this thesis is to be seen as an explorative case study that provides incentives for further research to develop a comprehensive theory.

### III.

## ALONG THE SILK ROAD: A Journey and Historical Reflections

### *III.1. The Journey*

On a Saturday early in November 2005 the journey to Iraqi Kurdistan began. The travel to Iraq set out with flight from Oslo to Diyarbakir, a major city in eastern Turkey. From there a four hours drive took us to the Iraqi border. When I got off the plane in Diyarbakir I sensed a difference in the atmosphere. The military were heavily armed and people around me spoke Kurdish, which is something that I had rarely heard in the western part of Turkey. The Turkish state perceives the autonomy of the Iraqi Kurdistan region as a threat to its relations towards the Kurdish minority, and to its regional security. The internationally heightened status of the Iraqi Kurdistan region has led to ‘securitisation’ of the Kurdish issue in Turkey<sup>3</sup>. This is a highly explosive concern because of the struggle between the Kurdish movement, the Partîye Karkaren Kurdistane (PKK) (renamed KADEK in 2001 and Kongra-Gel in 2003) and the Turkish state, which has been on and off since 1984 (Gunter, 2004: 107-108; McDowall, 1997: 418; Tank, 2005: 70-71).

#### III.1.1. Crossing the Border and the *Shadows of War*

After a long taxi journey to the Iraqi border along the ancient Silk Road, we arrived at the Ibrahim al-Khalil customs gate, as it was getting dark. I was the only woman there that I could see, at this border gate between Turkey and Iraq. Trucks, brown hills in the sunset, dust, and smell of petrol. We stood outside a low house made of concrete with small windows that had each a big group of men standing outside them. At the same time they were all trying to get their papers and passports to the border police on the

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<sup>3</sup> The Kurdish issue in Turkey has its beginnings in the longstanding ideology of *Kemalism*, which have dominated state relations towards Kurdish and other minorities in Turkey. The official policy since 1961 has been that ‘every citizen in Turkey is Turk’. Currently there are changes in official policy towards minority rights within Turkey (Gunter, 1999: 97-98; Tank, 2005: 72-73).

inside. The control of the revenues from Ibrahim al-Khalil is claimed to be one of the reasons for the civil war in Iraqi Kurdistan during the mid 1990's (Gunter, 1999: 82). The revenues from trade and smuggling through this gate were estimated a U.S. \$35 million annually in 1996, and together with issues of territorial control, this escalated the long going conflict between the KDP and PUK into violence in 1994 (Al-Khafaji, 1996: 36).

Arriving to the border made me realize what I had not yet read in any book. About half an hour before we reached Ibrahim al- Khalil an endless queue of trucks stood on the roadside. The taxi driver said that it takes about 20 days for a truck driver to get to the other side and back into Turkey with the goods. I asked what goods they are transporting, and he answered that because most of the oil refineries in Iraq are destroyed the raw oil is transported from Iraq to Turkey. When it has been processed it is transported back. Then there is trade in iron and minerals. Later I also realized that almost all 'every day' goods that are available in Iraqi Kurdistan are imported from Turkey, and that most of the construction work in Iraqi Kurdistan is Turkish businesses. I felt naïve; so far I had never thought that the trade between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan was to this extent.

Nordstrom (2004) describes border areas between states in times of conflict as places for the *shadows of war*, i.e. the shadow economy of trade and goods which flourishes in times of – and after – war. The structures of the shadow economy also tend to get institutionalised during conflict, which makes peace so difficult to achieve. These structures are not spoken about, and for people living in these border regions there might not be any other means for earning money. Nordstrom (2004) poses the question of how to break a system that is not spoken of? For Iraqi Kurdistan the large amount of the Middle East's precious resources of oil and water counts for this legacy. Additionally, over the border goods such as tea, sugar, drugs, people and money are smuggled. On my journey back to Oslo, I spent one night in the border town Zaxcho at the Iraqi-Turkish border. I had a conversation with one Kurdish man in the restaurant of the hotel I stayed at. Here there was a group of men with plenty of money because

the U.S.\$100 bills were literally thrown on the table. He told me that they were in charge of money transactions made between companies within Iraq and abroad. Because Iraq has no functioning bank system for the moment they carry millions of dollar everyday over the border and put them into bank accounts in Turkish banks. Hence, the endless queue of trucks on the Silk Road made more sense to me now.

### III.1.2. The Landscape of Mountains

Once we entered Iraqi Kurdistan, and we found the driver that NPA had sent for us, it was dark and we stayed one night in the city of Dohuk. The next day we set out on the six-hour journey from Dohuk to Sulaymaniya. We drove through brown mountain passages with vast brown plateaus between them. Where there was a river running through the landscape there were green trees. Driving was intense, the speed is high and risky overtaking leaves just a couple of seconds margin for the oncoming cars. Military checkpoints came before and after every town, where *Peshmerga* controlled every car. The coalition forces in Iraq have restructured their troops, so the US troops are in charge over the north, the British troops of the south, and all coalition members over the area of central Iraq. However, the northern part of Iraq has its own Kurdish army of 80 000<sup>4</sup> soldiers called the *Peshmerga*, which has the literal meaning *before death*. The *Peshmerga* are the soldiers of the political parties KDP and PUK (Folkvord & Melå 2002:338). These were people who were fighting against the former regime, and receive respect as individuals in Iraqi Kurdish society (comment in an interview with a LNGO employee). The car slowed down and stopped at a checkpoint, and the conversation that followed was very polite:

“*Choni kake* (Hello brother). *To choni kurban* (how are you dearest). *Kake choni* (hello brother). *To u aw ejinebiane ken?* (who are the foreigners in you car?). *Awane amerikin?* (Are they American?). *Na narwejin* (No, Norwegian). *Bo koe achit* (where are you going?). *Slemanî* (Sulaymaniya). *Sopas* (Thank you). *Ser chaw* (I put you on my eyes). *Kuahafiz* (good bye).”

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the difficulty of finding reliable sources on the current figure, I refer to Yildiz (2004: 110) who estimated 80 000 *Peshmerga* in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2003.



*“People have a way of talking to each other that prevents conflict. They address each other in the warmest ways such as my life or the rose of my eye. They are so kind so the other person has to answer in the same polite way, and this way you ensure each other that you have no bad intentions and that you are not hostile. You oblige one another in a relationship at once, and this is a special thing for the Sorani (Kurdish dialect spoken in Sulaymaniya district)”*

*Employee at NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

Much of the landscape felt empty. Later I heard some reasons for this; the former regime did not build roads to connect the Kurdish cities to each other, rather the roads all led to Baghdad<sup>5</sup>. As we travelled horizontally, the road went from west to east, and was relatively new. The villages are founded in areas that have access to vital necessities such as water and shelter. Therefore mostly they are away from the road, and situated towards the mountains. Another reason for the sense of emptiness can be consequent fighting and the strategies from the former regime, which intended to eradicate the Kurdish minority from the mountain region. Except from few a villages, I noticed that there were small compound houses closely built along the roadside. These were made of grey stone and concrete bricks. These houses were constructed by the former regime, and people were forcibly resettled here in relocation-camps from the surrounding villages. This made large amounts of the population entirely dependent upon state allocation of resources. In every compound-village there was a watchtower where soldiers from the regime had tight control over the lives of the people living here.

### III.1.3. Sulaymaniya

Arriving Sulaymaniya, we met the Norwegian representative for NPA and settled in with a family who had agreed to have us living with them for a month. The house was in an area in the outskirts of the city. Sulaymaniya is surrounded by a highway that

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<sup>5</sup> Iraq's infrastructure was constructed during the primary industrialisation, which took place from 1960 to 1990. Much of the infrastructure is linear, and orientated in north – south corridors. This includes railways, highways, water, electricity etc. More on this point see Brown (2005: 760).

goes in a circle around the city, and the area where our new temporary home stood was on the outside of this highway. The houses in the neighbourhood were mostly half-finished and many still under construction. The city is expanding, and the signs of fast housing development were evident in the lack of infrastructure. In our neighbourhood the roads were under construction and due to this the municipality had not started to collect waste, so it was just thrown outside the house. On the one side of the neighbourhood brown mountains were rising, and on the other was the highway and the city. This highway was full of cars, though I was told that during the rule of the former regime there were almost no cars on the road. Then the road was used as a means of control of the city, going outside the road was forbidden and trespassers were shot.

*“The mountains used to be green. Now they are brown. Saddam burned all trees so no Peshmerga could hide in the forest”*

*Kurdish Woman in Sulaymaniya.*

### *III.2. Antecedents: A Brief History of Kurdistan*

Iraqi Kurdistan is the geographical area in northern Iraq, which borders to Iran, Turkey and Syria. The name *Kurdistan* indicates an area inhabited by Kurds that covers eastern Turkey, northern and western Iran, northern Iraq, and the northern part of Syria. Additionally, there are larger Kurdish communities outside this entity living in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, in addition to Kurdish Diaspora predominantly found in Europe. The Kurds are the largest ethnic group without a state in the world. There are about 30 million Kurds inhabiting the geographical area of *Kurdistan*, and in Iraq they comprise 25 % of the population (4 million). During the Ottoman Empire the administrative area of *Kurdistan* was divided into three *wilayets* (provinces); Diyarbakir and Raqqa that are in present day Turkey and Syria; and Mosul that coincides more or less with today's northern Iraq (Natali, 2004: 112-113; Van Bruinessen, 1992: 11, 157-158; Yildiz, 2004: 9). However, *Kurdistan* is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious area. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire transformed the state borders of the Middle East, thus the establishment of the state borders in this

area resulted in struggles for power and autonomy for various ethnic and religious groups<sup>6</sup>.

There is a notion of a historical homeland for the Kurds. Yet, the Kurdish national identity coincided with the growth of an ethnic identity among Turks and Arabs in the late nineteenth century. Previous to this, the dominant identity was based upon citizenship in the Ottoman state and membership of a religious community. Although, the tribal and nomadic social structure that characterized the Kurdish social organization was a primordial identity stronger than that of the Ottoman state. With the upheaval of the Ottoman Empire new identities were forged. In which the Kurds who ended up in states that were not their own, developed their national identity as distinct from these dominant state identities. *Kurdistan* then, as a defined territory is not recognized by the international community although the *de facto* borders of this geographical area are relatively clear for people living within it (McDowall, 1997: 1-3).

### *III.3. The Kurds and the Iraqi State*

Iraq did not exist as a state previous to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. After World War One the Iraqi state was created out of the three Ottoman *wilayets* Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, when the British acquired control over Iraq in November 1918. In the first instance it was in the British interest to protect the trade rout to India. Iraq was established as a British protectorate with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1924. And in here lies much of the complexity of the current power struggle. For the Kurds, the creation of the Iraqi state was a defeat for those who hoped for the establishment of a Kurdish state. The new Iraqi Government was comprised by Sunni Arab officers from the towns, and had limited support, which resulted in a general lack of feelings of national identity (Sluglett, 1976: 3-7, 86-92). The British mandate ended in 1932, however, the

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to Kurds, Turkmen, Persians, Arabs, various Christian communities, such as Assyrians and Chaldeans, in addition to Jews and Yazidiz, inhabit the area of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurds, Arabs and the Turkmen are the largest ethnic groups in Iraqi Kurdistan. The majority of Iraqi Kurds are Sunni Muslim, where about 15 % are Shiite Muslims (Lukitz, 1995: 22-29; McDowall, 1997: 8-13; Sluglett, 1976: 1).

mentioning of the Kurds and the Turkmen as ethnic minorities was left out of the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty, which brought great tension to the northern parts of Iraq (Sluglett, 1976: 181; Lukitz, 1995: 33-34).

Until 1958 Iraq was a Monarchy, throughout which the Sunni Arab military officers powers grew stronger. However, Kurdish uprisings had occurred already before the establishment of the Iraqi state. The Barzani clan, with its leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani, revolted against the British in 1922, and again in 1943, but was defeated. Barzani established the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946, and supported the 1958 military coup led by 'The Free Officers' that established Iraq as a progressive republic under the rule of Abd al-Karim Qasim. In 1963 a coup d'état followed where Qasim was executed and the Baath Party, which had a socialist pan-Arab nationalist ideology, took power. With yet another coup in 1968, Saddam Hussein became a central person within the Baath Party, and seized power in 1979 (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1990: 15-20, 112, 178).

For the Kurds, repeated requests of autonomy within Iraq were not met and by the summer of 1961 fighting broke out between the Barzani tribe and government forces. Until 1975 this struggle went on, and following the outbreak of the Iran - Iraq war, the Kurdish struggle gained support from Iran and U.S.. However, the Algiers Accords brokered a truce between Iran and Iraq, and left the Kurds without allies. Thousands of Kurds fled into Iran, and the Kurdish rebellion collapsed. Ruthless control from the Iraqi government, and a split in the Kurdish movement, had weakened the Kurdish forces. Jalal Talabani established the PUK in 1976 with other urban left-wing intellectuals, who diverged from the more traditional tribal structured KDP. This fault line is still seen between the parties. Within KDP, Mustafa Barzani died and his son Masud took over the leadership. With the outbreak of the second Iran-Iraq war in 1980 KDP and PUK fought on the Iranian side against Iraq. During the war years the Iraqi regime strategies towards Kurds in the north, and Shiite opposition in the south, grew

harsher. With Iran's defeat in 1988, the Iraqi regime launched the Anfal<sup>7</sup> strategy on the Kurds (Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 71-75; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1990: 79-82).

The Anfal operations were executed by the Baathist military during the spring of 1988 until the spring of 1989, and were strategic attempts of eradicating Kurdish villages in the north of Iraq. The aim was to make impossible any support to the *Peshmerga* and to deal with Kurdish minority. The Anfal campaigns resulted in the destruction of 4000 villages, at least 1.5 million people displaced, and approximately 180 000 killed (Human Rights Watch 1993). What was specific with the Anfal campaigns was the use of chemical weapons, of which the attack on the village of Halabja where mustard gas instantly killed 5000 people, is the most known to the outside world. The Anfal campaigns had their logic in the ending of the Iran-Iraq war, where Iran had brokered a truce between PUK and KDP, thus threatening Iraqi authority by offering support to the Kurdish guerrillas (Yildiz, 2004: 25-26).

#### *III.4. The Uprising*

Iraqi Kurdistan has since the end of the Gulf War in 1991 been governed by the two major Kurdish political parties KDP and PUK. When Saddam's troops were defeated in Kuwait, the population rebelled in the south and north in what is referred to as 'the uprising'. The uprising in the north of Iraq (it started in the south of Iraq amongst the Shiite population in the beginning of March) began among the population on fifth of March 1991 in the village of Ranya near the Iranian border, and spread as a revolt against the Baath party throughout the Kurdish region of Iraq. It was not a coordinated rebellion. The Kurdish party leaders have stated that they were surprised of the strong popular support the uprising gained, and that the parties did not incite the rebellion. It started for many reasons, some point out that it was because of the popular understanding that a revolt could expect support from U.S.. This is accounted for by people participating in the revolt, pointing at the broadcastings from *Radio Voice*

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<sup>7</sup>Al Anfal, the term has its origins in one *Shura* of the Koran, and allude to the 'spoils of holy war' (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

*America* that were encouraging the people of Iraq to make revolt against the Baath regime, and telling that support could be expected (Folkvord & Melå, 2002: 201; Yildiz, 2004: 34-35).

However, U.S. support did not come, and a harsh retaliation from the Baath regime led to one of the biggest refugee flows in the history of the UN. Approximately 2 million people fled to the borders of Turkey and Iran, where Turkey did not allow the refugees to cross the border at first. After international pressure, refugee camps were established on both sides of the border. Resolution 688<sup>8</sup> was passed by the UN on April 5, establishing a non-fly zone in Iraq above the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel, and a similar zone in the south of Iraq, both for the protection of the population. The ‘safe havens’ were used by U.S. and British forces to conduct bomb raids towards the Iraqi military, indicating that protection of the population in the area might not have been the single reason for the ‘safe havens’. The Kurds created their own autonomous zone within the safe-heaven, an action that Saddam met by establishing a military line between this area and rest of Iraq, thus withdrawing all civil and administrative personnel, and installed an economic blockade towards the Kurds (Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 78-79; McDowall, 1997: 369-379).

In the north of Iraq the establishment of the ‘safe haven’ was of importance for the Kurdish opposition, and this area became a *de-facto* autonomous region of Kurdish self rule. The two parties KDP and PUK established a regional legislative assembly and held elections in 1992. The seats were divided between them in an almost 50 – 50 manner, with a five seats in the Kurdish Regional Parliament allocated to other parties and minority groups. In 1994 power struggles between PUK and KDP led to civil war in Iraqi Kurdistan, which continued on and off until a final cease-fire was signed in 1998. The so- called Washington agreement. A few years later the Kurdish leaders did

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<sup>8</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 688 was historical in the sense that this was the first resolution (since 1926) that mentioned the Kurds by name; hereby the Kurds status was heightened internationally. Furthermore, it was the first time UN had insisted on the right of interference in the internal affairs of a member state (McDowall, 1997: 375).

play an important role in the build up of 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' (McDowall, 1997: 379-382; Gunter, 1999, see chapter 4).

### *III.5. War on Iraq*

At the time the international community turned its efforts towards Iraq in two ways; first, UN implemented the 'oil for food' programme, where Iraq was allowed to sell a certain amount of oil annually, although international sanctions were continued towards Iraq. Secondly, the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) started inspections in 1991 of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The final reports of these bodies were that Iraq's nuclear stock was gone, however, inspection crisis escalated in 1998, eventually leading to 'Operation Desert Fox'. This was a bombardment of Iraq from U.S. and U.K. military without authorization from the Security Council. These actions led to a new inspections mission of Iraqi WMD's, the UNMOVIC that entered Iraq in 2002. The continuing economic sanctions had struck the civilian population the hardest, infant mortality rates doubled within a decade, and a humanitarian crisis was escalating. Even though UNMOVIC did not find WMD's, in 2002 U.S. and U.K. statements had changed towards 'regime change' in Iraq (Graham-Brown & Toensing, 2003: 165-173).

Post September 11 changed U.S. foreign policy, and rhetoric of pre-emptive strike within a 'war on terror' was emphasised. During fall 2002 tensions escalated, with U.S. rhetoric that a war on Iraq was inevitable, while European officials did not support this policy, and neither did the Security Council. Albeit large public opposition against a war, and without the support from the UN, the U.S. and U.K. (with support from additional allies) attacked Iraq on 20 March 2003. The Kurds were vital for success in this War on Iraq, with their up to 80 000 *Peshmerga* acting at the northern frontier. When the Turkish government did not provide support for the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. focused on negotiations with the Kurds. Once the so-called 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' started, the Kurds captured Mosul and Kerkuk, and KDP and PUK managed to control the area with little involvement of U.S. troops. The 'Operation

Iraqi Freedom' ended rapidly on 1 May 2003, however, it turned into a protracted conflict, which has still not seen an end (Yildiz, 2004: 103-113).

The invasion of Iraq by U.S. coalition troops in 2003 toppled the Baath regime and its leader Saddam Hussein. These developments had great consequences for the formerly oppressed ethnic and religious groups within Iraq, as the new power holders in Iraq are the Shiites and the Kurds. Jalal Talabani, the leader of PUK, is the President of the new Iraqi Government. While the fall of the former regime has brought about the dismantling of the Iraqi state, old power struggles rose to the surface once the strong control of the former regime disappeared. Violent attacks from various militant groups<sup>9</sup> have continued almost daily since the US officially ended the war in spring 2003. Thus new and old tensions have come to the surface in Iraq, and the current future of the entity as a state is uncertain.

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<sup>9</sup> The militant groups include Baath party loyalists, Islamist fighters who pursue jihad against the western occupation including both Shiite and Sunni groups, sectarian and ethnic groups, opportunists conducting kidnappings to gain money, as well as other groups, see Guidere & Harling (2006).



## IV.

### **WAR AND PEACE: A Theoretical Framework**

“Peace begins in the front-line actions of rebuilding the possibility of self (which violence has sought to undermine) and society (which massacres and destruction have sought to undermine)” (Nordstrom, 2004: 184).

#### *IV.1. The Question of Definition*

What should a definition of peace entail? If one thinks in binary oppositions peace would be the direct opposite of war, at the same time as the concepts derive their meaning from each other as dialectical opposites. The existence of peace would always be dependent upon the existence of war, yet the dynamics in social life makes peace a question of definition, as peace can be found in the midst of war. War can be experienced while sitting in the northern hemisphere looking at television images of combat in Iraq, which is a significant contrast from physically being three hours away from the shooting and experiencing peace. This was my subjective experience of travelling to Iraq only being familiar with television images of war, an experience that was different from the calm I experienced in Sulaymaniya.

The “Operation Iraqi Freedom” officially ended 1 May 2003 when U.S. President Bush announced that ‘major combat operations’ were over, a message that was broadcasted all over the world. Yet the fighting and violence in central parts of Iraq has not stopped as I write this in the spring of 2006. Rather it is escalating, and media give daily reports about an outbreak of civil war. For the U.S. and their allies one war is over while another is still uncompleted, as this quotation from U.S. Central Command illustrates “The official end of “Major Combat Operation” Pres Bush declared was 01 MAY 03. But please do not confuse, we are still at war” (Yildiz 2004: 113). However, in the city of Sulaymaniya in Iraqi Kurdistan people told me it had

been peaceful throughout the official and post-official war, and except for a couple of car bombs there had been no combat.

Nordstrom (2004: 172) points out that the definition of war and peace can be seen as a political process, where specific political goals decide what the term war is intended to match. And so war and peace change along with the political goals. Her reflection is based upon fieldwork in Somaliland and Angola, where the former was termed a war-zone although the society was in a phase of rehabilitation and non-combat. The latter was termed a peace-zone although fighting was ongoing, except no official statement of this was recognized because a peace accord was signed. The example depicts the ambiguity with defining peace – the definition does not necessarily describe the realities experienced by people living in a society marked by armed conflict. Nordstrom (2004: 184) provides a reflection of the gap between the *de facto* situation on the ground and the politics of peace; that the peace accords brokered on elite levels will never work if the rehabilitation of society, which is made by people rebuilding themselves and society, is not there as a base to build upon.

Within Iraq the politics of peace is under negotiation, yet any formal agreement of peace accords do not seem to be reached in the near future. Still rehabilitation of society is taking place among those who experience non-combat and restoration in their daily lives. About the politics of peace, if this is intended to mean the peace brokered at elite levels with the compliance of the international community, the current situation within Iraq can be described as a transitional phase. The northern parts under control of the Kurdish parties are experiencing social rehabilitation and economic growth, while other parts of Iraq experience combat.

#### IV.1.1. Definitions of War

From a conflict resolution perspective the root causes of violent conflicts are sought out and addressed. Edward Azar's (1990) theory on protracted social conflicts perceives communal identity (communal here intends politicised identity groups) and

human needs as the dynamics that generates violent and persistent conflicts.<sup>10</sup> One character of protracted social conflict is the blurred demarcation between internal and external sources and actors, where changing goals, actors and targets reflect multiple causal factors and dynamics in conflict. Furthermore, as internal repression, external intervention, and manipulation of local grievances increase, terrorism and low intensity warfare become common practices. Finally, these conflicts have no clear starting – or end – point (Azar, 1990: 6).

Similarly, Kaldor's (2001: 90-111) concept of 'new wars' is a description of patterns of war that has developed with the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet block. The 'new wars' are affected by extreme globalization, where a range of new militaries deploys new forms of violence: the decaying remnants of state armies, paramilitary groups (often financed by governments), self-defence units, foreign mercenaries and international troops. The political aim of these wars' is political mobilization on the basis of identity. However, these politics are closely entangled with their economic basis by predatory behaviour of the actors involved. As a part of globalized interconnections the distinctions between politics and economics, military and civil, and peace and war are harder to draw.

In reference to Iraq, the suggestion put forward is that the current situation share features with both Azar's protracted social conflicts and Kaldor's new wars. In terms of various military actors and types of violence that targets civilians, Kaldor's description is applicable. Moreover, the external intervention, and identity based group lines on which violence is mobilized, the description of protracted social conflict is apt. Communal identity and human needs can be seen as variables that have heightened the violence between communal identity groups in Iraq, as the country has since it's establishment been ruled by one group that has denied access and satisfaction

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<sup>10</sup> According to Miall et. al. (2000: 68-72) the development of Azar's theory in the 1970s, was an early formulation of what has now become orthodoxy in how root causes on major armed conflicts in the post-Cold War world are perceived. At the time when it was developed its intra-state focus differed from the core of international relations literature, where focus was upon inter-state wars and the bipolarity of the cold war. Rather, Azar put focus upon the role of identity groups and their relations to the state. In fact, it is argued that since 1945 the pattern of armed conflicts has been of intra-state character as opposed to inter state.

of basic human needs to other groups. However, the complexity of actors and interests complicates explanations of the current conflict. Hence, for limiting the scope of the thesis, the nature of human needs as part of conflicts, and as such, as part of building peace is applied as an analytical tool on the case of Iraqi Kurdistan.

#### *IV.2. Human Needs at the Core of Conflict*

Azar (1990) sets out a model that explains the causes of protracted social conflict through the variables of communal content, basic human needs, state governance, and international linkages. The deprivation of human needs can lead to protracted social conflict, when the needs for physical security and well-being, communal recognition, participation and control, and distributive justice are repeatedly denied. However, there are preconditions that already have strained the social fabric of societies where protracted social conflicts occur. For conflict to escalate the communal content is claimed to be a precondition. Thus, multi-communal political activity together with colonial legacy of artificially drawn state borders may lead to conflict. Azar provides the example of the Middle East, where borders were drawn in such way that nations were divided and large amounts of communal identity groups were artificially incorporated in the new states. As in the case of Lebanon, and my suggestion as in the case of Iraq, conflict evolves where historical patterns of rivalry between communal identity groups exist, and a single communal group have dominated power as a result of colonialization. Within these societies the nation building process has strained the social fabric, and thus escalated fragmentation and conflict.

Secondly, Azar (1990: 7-10) propose three basic human needs<sup>11</sup>, which accordingly are fundamental for human life. Human needs are ontological and therefore non negotiable (Burton, 2001). *Acceptance needs* concern the recognition of identity, in reference to multi-communal societies it is the formation and acceptance of collective identities. The argument put forward by Azar is that individuals strive to fulfil their

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<sup>11</sup> Applying needs theory (Maslow 1954) in conflict resolution was developed by John Burton during the 1960s. Burton put emphasis on problem solving approaches for resolving conflicts, and did together with Edward Azar develop the theory on protracted social conflicts at the University of Maryland (Miall et.al. 2000: 45-46).

developmental human needs through the formation of identity groups. Secondly *access needs*, which concern individual and communal physical survival and well-being, depend upon the satisfaction of material needs. Conflict does not rise directly from the deprivation of material needs, rather the deprivation of material needs derive from neglected access to effective participation in political, market, and decision-making institutions. Deprivation of material needs tends to get communal expressions, and when groups are denied their *access needs*, this leads to dispute over political and economic power. Azar connects the former *acceptance needs* (communal identity) as the root cause to denial of *access needs* and therefore deprivation of physical needs. The final basic needs that require fulfilment are *security needs*, which are physical security, housing and nutrition. Additionally, *security needs* includes securing the fulfilment of *acceptance* and *access* needs.

Furthermore, the fulfilment or deprivation of basic human needs is linked to the issue of governance and the role of the state. The regulation of needs is mostly conducted through state authority. As such, the communal content of the state relates to the fulfilment of basic human needs; since power in the hand of a minority group, type of regime, and level of legitimacy influence the state's capacity to govern. Societies experiencing protracted social conflict tend to be characterized by authoritarian governments maximizing their interests through the control of the state. Moreover, by limiting access to social institutions for other identity groups the regime brings on crisis of legitimacy. Hence, these are decisive factors for conflict (Azar 1990: 10-11).

Lastly, Azar (1990: 11) provides two models for how states are linked to the international system; the first is through economic dependency that limits states autonomy and distorts economic development. The second is through political and military client relationships of weaker states to stronger powers. International linkages are argued to influence the formation of social and political institutions within a state, and their impact on the state governance.

To sum up with the words of Azar;

“In brief, protracted social conflicts occur when communities are deprived of satisfaction of their basic needs on the basis of their communal identity. However, the deprivation is the result of a complex causal chain involving the role of the state and the pattern of international linkages. Furthermore, initial conditions (colonial legacy, domestic historical setting, and the multicommunal nature of the society) play important roles in shaping the genesis of protracted social conflict.” (1990: 12)

### IV.2.1. Basic Human Needs and the Research Questions

The theory of protracted social conflict is chosen as an explanation of conflict in this thesis, because it emphasises basic human needs as an important component within conflicts. Furthermore, the theory helps formulating answers to the research questions *‘What are the main objectives of people within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan? What obstacles are civil society actors facing in their work? To what degree can it be argued that they have peacebuilding as their goal?’* Firstly, the basic human needs approach is helpful for seeking out what objectives people in civil society work for in Iraqi Kurdistan, since the empirical data points at a frustration over not having their basic needs fulfilled. Consequently objectives of people in civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan can be argued to be fulfilment of basic human needs. Secondly, the theory highlights governance and the role of the state. As the further discussion reveals within the theoretical chapter, as well as by the presentation of the empirical data, governance and the role of the state are important for understanding both objectives of civil society, as well as peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan. Thirdly, the patterns of international linkages in societies experiencing protracted social conflict are described as economic dependency and clientelist relationship to stronger military powers. These factors are highlighted in the description of the cultural and socio-political structure of the society of Iraqi Kurdistan. Furthermore, economic dependency and clientelist relationship to strong military powers can be argued to be an explanation of the political reality of the Iraqi Kurdish authorities. Lastly, in protracted social conflicts basic human needs require fulfilment and are as such vital components within peacebuilding, as peacebuilding is about addressing underlying causes of conflicts.

The theory of protracted social conflicts argues for an understanding of domestic, regional and international conflict not only as struggle over material interests and resource acquisition, but fundamentally as a struggle over developmental needs. Since the theory argues that addressing basic human needs is required for peacebuilding, it provides a framework for answering the research questions of this thesis. Following chapter provides a further debate of the notions of peacebuilding and civil society, as parts of the theoretical framework of the thesis.

### *IV.3. Defining Peacebuilding*

The notion of peace can be seen as either a limited or expansive concept. ‘Negative peace’ indicates the limited view of peace as in the absence of war or armed conflict. The notion of ‘positive peace’ is the expansive view of peace that in addition to absence of armed conflict embrace the absence of inequality, injustice, oppression and the maintenance of social, political and economic conditions. Johan Galtung as one of the fathers of peace research, gave voice to this view arguing that peace does not only mean the absence of direct violence, but also the existence of social structures that enable all individuals to develop their full potential. Galtung differentiates between direct violence, cultural and structural violence (Galtung, 1996; Miall et. al., 2000: 188).

Even though there is agreement within the peacebuilding community in understanding peace as in ‘positive peace’, the approaches to peacebuilding within policy-making and academic research are varying, which result in different views on what peacebuilding entail. Following from Cousens (2001: 5-10) one can set out two broad approaches to peacebuilding, the *inductive*, and respectively the *deductive* approach. The inductive approach emphasizes the root causes of conflict, in line with the view presented by Azar (1990). Scholars such as Lederach (2001) provide methods to peacebuilding that address actors at all levels, from grass-root leaders to top-level leadership, and promotes dialogue both horizontally and vertically among these actors for securing a lasting peace in societies experiencing conflict. The inductive approach

perceives the specific context of a conflict, and peacebuilding as a holistic enterprise will as such address the needs of a particular society to solidify peace.

The deductive approach to peacebuilding emphasises existing capacities and mandates of international organizations, rather than the root causes of conflict. According to the former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his *Agenda for Peace* (1992), peacebuilding together with preventive diplomacy, peace making and peacekeeping were presented as the means to consolidate peace. The *Agenda* was the outset for peacebuilding becoming central within UN peacekeeping missions. Pointed out by Cousens (2001: 6-7) the view of conflict in this approach was linear, and peacebuilding was perceived as the last phase in a conflict, after negotiated settlement was in place. It did not consider the purpose of peace in situations where no formal agreement existed. The *Agenda's* definition of peacebuilding was so broad that it eventually became an inventory of those needs that could be filled by international actors. Although, other scholars point out that within contemporary UN peacebuilding, emphasis is also put upon the root causes of conflict on all levels. For example, the removal of structural causes is acknowledged. However the focus here seems to be upon 'bad' governments and underdevelopment. Additionally, reconciliation with the focus on the processes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), the material reconstruction, and so-called state building, are key issues in contemporary UN peacebuilding (Bellamy et. al. 2004: 235-236).

From the outset of this thesis, the approach taken to define peacebuilding is of an inductive character, stressing the needs found within Iraqi Kurdistan as they are perceived by civil society actors on the grass-root level. Azar's argument that "in conflict situations in the underdeveloped world, peacebuilding and development with justice must be regarded as two sides of the same coin" (1990:3) illustrates the linkage of peacebuilding, development and the need for addressing underlying causes of conflict in solving protracted social conflicts. Therefore, the definition of peacebuilding applied in this thesis acknowledges that basic needs require fulfilment for securing peace, and includes developmental activities that are required for post war



reconstruction and rehabilitation. This view of peacebuilding perceives it as a process which can be simultaneously ongoing with violent conflict. Consequently peacebuilding can be defined as the ‘negative’ task to prevent relapse into overt violence, and the ‘positive’ tasks of aiding national recovery and furthering eventual removal of underlying causes of internal war (Miall et.al., 2000).

#### *IV.4. What to Build the Peace Upon: The Issue of ‘Political Will’*

Since the enterprise of peacebuilding is closely connected to development, many of the obstacles that have been met by actors in peacebuilding relate to problems that development aid has encountered for decades. One obstacle is ‘political will’, and as it is a prerequisite for successful outcomes of development aid, it can be argued that it is similarly imperative for peacebuilding. It is pointed out by scholars that the requirements of development can contradict other political issues that are more pressing (Barakat & Chard, 2004: 26-28). ‘Political will’ is further specially linked to peacebuilding, as it is distinguished from ongoing humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crisis, by the existence of specific political aims for reducing relapse of conflict, and working for reconstruction, reconciliation and recovery (Miall et. al., 2000). The existence of specific political aims for peacebuilding is also highlighted by Kumar (2001: 183), who state that the key to lasting peace within a society are political processes which have legitimacy, and can manage multiple crisis and disputes between the members of a society, before eruption of violent conflict.

Therefore, the issue of ‘political will’ for peacebuilding needs a brief illumination in reference to the current situation in Iraq. Firstly, ‘political will’ for peacebuilding has to come from the parties within the conflict. Secondly, a formal agreement can help clarifying the ‘political will’ for the post-war reconstruction, and the peace. However, both of these points are lacking in Iraq. The U.S. pre-war planning for a post-Saddam Iraq began already in 2002, and the attention and planning was substantial. There was a deliberate attempt to anticipate post-war consequences. Involving the local population, in this case the Iraqis, was acknowledged as an important lesson learnt

from Afghanistan. However, the plans were drawn up in Washington and this limited local participation, since the only local population joining the planning were those exile Iraqis the U.S. government termed 'Free Iraqis' (Mac Ginty, 2003, 606-611). The post-war reconstruction plan was essentially a 'top-down' operation, and not in contact with the Iraqi people and their livelihoods. The U.S. department of state, which was the governmental body that had the expert knowledge on the issue, were overseen. Additionally, UN's role in Iraq was limited by the U.S. administration (Philips, 2005: 7-9). Brown (2005: 761-767) points out the issue of 'political will' in regards to this; The U.S. government as the principle donor for reconstruction, determined the conditions and made the planning. The 'political will' was not one of sustainable development, rather the aim was a short and easy reconstruction that would help the U.S. and their allies to 'win the war'. This example depicts the importance of 'political will', and that involvement by the people whom peacebuilding was concerned, was not fulfilled in the case of Iraq.

### IV.4.1. Peacebuilding and 'Political Will' in Iraqi Kurdistan

In Iraqi Kurdistan more than a decade of semi-autonomous government has resulted in strengthening of the Kurdish areas securitywise, but also regarding reconstruction and rehabilitation of society. However, within Iraqi Kurdistan the two separate administrations have worked without a joint strategy for rehabilitation. Thus, the absence of any formal agreement that could operate as a legal framework for rehabilitation of society is a great barrier for peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan. The political developments do slowly proceed with a new Iraqi parliament resuming power, within Iraqi Kurdistan the negotiators are focused upon establishing the administrative borders of Kurdistan, and one aim is to incorporate Kerkuk within the Kurdish administrative unit. Yet the argument put forward here is that these competing interests maintain the lack of 'political will' for a national and transparent approach to reconstruction and rehabilitation of society. The argument put forward by Barakat & Chard (2004: 26-28) highlights 'political will' as a prerequisite for development aid. Thus in line with this argument it can be claimed that the lack of 'political will' is a

great obstacle for peacebuilding in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, since it appears that other issues are perceived as more pressing.

Furthermore, Kumar (2001: 183) argues that the ability to create a healthy political process in conflict situations requires appropriate relations between different groups, actors and sectors within society. Kumar also points out that this might emerge outside formal political arenas. However, it will need to eventually take a formal political form. Which in reference to peacebuilding might concern integration within a general policy of peacebuilding to succeed. Recognizing the absence of 'political will' and formal agreements for rehabilitation of society, I turn my focus towards civil society actors inside Iraqi Kurdistan. It might be that the creation of a healthy political process is emerging outside formal political arenas in Iraqi Kurdistan. It can be argued that relations are strengthened between groups in society, through the work undertaken by civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan, which engages cooperation with both local and international actors, and the political authorities. Consequently, are they working towards what Kumar (2001: 183) argues to be imperative for peacebuilding: that is, appropriate relations between different groups, actors and sectors within society, that can manage multiple crisis and disputes without relapse into violence.

In the following section, the focus is turned towards the concept of civil society. Following a definition of the concept, a debate of the concept is provided in which core ideas and critiques are presented. This is followed by a presentation of civil society in peacebuilding, and consequently in violent conflict. Next the theory presented is applied to the case of Iraqi Kurdistan.

## V.

# EXPLANATIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACEBUILDING

### *V.1. Defining Civil Society*

I apply the notion of civil society to describe the actors I met in Iraqi Kurdistan, who were actively taking part in social rehabilitation projects. Following from Lederach's definition of civil society as:

“...a web of human relationships made up of individual people, their networks, organizations, and institutions around which social and community life is built. It is dynamic, adaptive, at times nebulous, at times well structured, though much of it is informal. The only thing civil society is not is the formal structures of official political governance, particularly at national levels.” (Lederach, 2001: 842)

I include actors in a definition of civil society that are both organised, such as international and local NGOs, and groups with less formal organization. Unorganised, though active, actors include professional groups such as teachers and students, traditionally organized groups such as clan, and informal self-help activity. The focus upon *activity* can be further strengthened by the argument from Lewis (2002: 570), that the usefulness of the civil society concept has two dimensions; the concept can be useful ‘to think with’ and ‘to act with’. The former is useful in relation to understanding political and social realities, while the latter can inspire to action on the ground.

As pointed out in the methodology chapter, civil society in peacebuilding is to a large degree concerning the involvement of NGOs. Hence, a definition of what the term intends is required for further clarification. NGOs, which stand for non-governmental organizations, are according to Lewis (2001: 38) a sub-set of third sector

organizations<sup>12</sup> concerned with development, human rights and social change. Furthermore, a description of NGOs is provided by a structural/operational definition of the non-profit sector (Salamon & Anheier, 1992 in Lewis 2001: 37) that emphasises the following key characteristics: it is formal; it is private; it is non-profit distributing; it is self-governing; it is voluntary. In relation to peacebuilding NGOs can further be divided into those who are from outside the country of operation; the international NGOs (INGOs), and those who are inside; the local NGOs (LNGOs). Furthermore, the types of work they conduct do also vary; there are those who are purely humanitarian, such as the International Red Cross/Crescent Societies (ICRC) or Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF). Or those who are working as development aid organizations. One can further differentiate service delivery organizations and advocacy organizations, the latter primarily seeking to change the status quo. Many organizations combine the two, such as the Norwegian Peoples Aid (Young, 1992: 4).

### V.1.1 Obstacles for INGOs in Iraq

Due to terror attacks in the autumn of 2003 the UN and many INGOs withdrew their personnel from Iraq. Currently, UN and international actors have established a development fund, through which UN and international actors, such as U.S. Aid, subcontract NGOs within Iraq for conducting their projects. Still UN and most international agencies are established in Amman, Jordan, because of the security situation within Iraq. Researchers indicate obstacles that development and humanitarian aid face in situations of conflict/post-conflict, which are specific for societies experiencing violent conflict. Within the debate the issue of security is central. There tends to be focus upon civil-military relations, and upon the question whether humanitarian organizations can stay non-political in a complex security situation or not (Keating & Knight, 2004).

The security situation in Iraq implies recent developments that arguably have limited involvement of the UN agencies and NGOs in relief and rehabilitation operations. The

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<sup>12</sup> Lewis (2001: 36) definition of the 'third sector' describes it as a concept that includes both a group of organizations, as well as a social space, that represent a wide range of organizations that are concerned with a diversity of human interests.

major challenges facing NGOs in Iraq are summed up by Monshipouri (2005: 104-105) to entail the dilemma of cooperating with the military and thus becoming politicised in their work. The attacks against UN headquarters in Baghdad 19 August 2003 and against the ICRC offices in Baghdad 27 October 2003, made it clear that any Western organization, including relief workers, are targets in the current conflict in Iraq. The dilemma of government funding for NGOs is problematic when the donors and the peace enforcers are the same, such as the situation is in Iraq. NGOs are in many instances subcontracted by the occupying forces U.S. and U.K. One example provided by Monshipouri (2005: 102) is Save the Children UK that has operated in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991, and who's half of the budget of \$1.5 million a year is met by the UK government. This example indicates the difficulty for NGOs to remain neutral in a conflict situation. Consequently, while humanitarians such as the ICRC are committed to neutrality in conflict situations, other NGOs might not follow this principle.

### *V.2. History of the Concept*

Historically the notion of civil society is linked to the ideas of the individual rights and the social contract that originated in the seventeen and eighteen centuries enlightenment philosophy in Europe. Hegel was the first to conceptualise civil society as a distinct sphere resting between the state and the family, equating it with the sphere of economy (Hegel 1996 [1820] in Kaldor, 2003: 6-7). Later the Italian Marxist Gramsci examined the relations between the state and civil society (i.e. the private sector), as mutually reinforcing each other to the advantage of a certain strata, groups and institutions in society. Gramsci moved away from equating civil society with the sphere of economy, instead perceived civil society as the sphere of hegemony (Buttigieg, 1995: 6-7; Kaldor, 2003: 8).

It can be argued that three different versions characterize the contemporary use of the civil society concept. The first is the 'activist' version, which is explained as a revival of the idea of a civil society during the 1970's. Throughout Latin America and Eastern Europe the concept of civil society appeared as a reaction against authoritarian states,

and was an effort to create a space outside the state, where individuals could communicate freely (i.e. struggle for political and social rights). The second version is the 'neo-liberal' perception of civil society. This version relates to neo-liberal ideals of reducing state influence upon society, seen in the 'good governance' concept associated with structural adjustment programs (SAP). Civil society organizations were perceived as the actors that would provide those services that the SAP's cut away as state expenses throughout the developing world (Kaldor, 2003: 7-10)

The final version of the concept of civil society is a post-modernist critique claiming that the concept of civil society outside Western Europe and North America, exist as traditional and neo-traditional organizations instead of highly institutionalised organizations that are commonly equated with civil society within Western Europe and North America. Therefore the concept of civil society has to be more culturally sensitive, and take into consideration various national and religious groupings (Hann, 1996: 7-10; Lewis, 2002: 570-573). Suggestions of non-Western civil societies, which expand the concept to enhance more than NGO's as the vital actors, include informal self-help activity, elder's committees, women's credit groups, and kinship relations (Lewis 2002: 578-581; Bayat, 2002: 2).

#### V.2.1. Civil Society in the Middle East

More specifically, within the Middle East, an understanding of civil society can commence from the socio-political structure which is described as 'neo-patriarchy' (Sharabi, 1988)<sup>13</sup>. The characteristics of the neo-patriarchal society are briefly presented as firstly, social fragmentation; the family clan, religious and ethnic group is the basis of social organization, as opposed to civil society or the nation. Secondly, all relations from family unit to the state, are within an authoritarian organization that is characterized by domination, coercion, and paternalism. This is perceived as being opposed to equality and mutual recognition. Thirdly and fourthly are attributes of absolutist paradigms and ritualistic practices, which are leading to behaviour governed

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<sup>13</sup> The theory of 'neo-patriarchy' is a study of Arab society, however, I believe the general structures of the 'neo-patriarchal' society are applicable to the Middle East.

by ceremony and ritual, opposed to plurality and innovation (Sharabi, 1988; Leca, 2001: 61).

The 'neo-patriarchy' is a result of continuous economic and cultural dependency within the Middle East, which has altered traditional patriarchal society into a 'neo' formation through rapid economic development and distorted modernization (Leca, 2001: 61). It can be useful to refer back to Azar's (1990: 11) claim of the patterns of international linkages in societies experiencing protracted social conflict. These are described as economic dependency and clientelist relationship to stronger military powers. This is in line with the theory in 'neo-patriarchy' and illustrates how these factors have an effect on the socio-cultural structure of society. Because of the neo-liberal policies implemented in the late 1980s throughout declining economies in oil-rich authoritarian states within the Middle East, socio-economic changes were provoked. As more than a decade of research has shown<sup>14</sup>, organization within civil society does exist within the Middle East. This was prompted by several developments, such as the change in livelihood for the former well off middle and upper classes. Government employees and college students have been pushed into the urban poor by the states declining ability to meet the needs of its citizens (Bayat, 2002: 1-2). In reference to Iraq, the war against Iran, and the subsequent Gulf War in 1991, devastated the system of a totalitarian welfare state. This had been built up since the 1970s, and encapsulated every corner of Iraqi society (Said, 2003: 17). Furthermore, civil society in the Middle East incorporates a diversity of groups, from Islamists to human rights activists, NGOs to writers' organizations, in addition to informal self-help activities. Kubba (2003: 30-34) states that the access to, and flow of, information, and the rising number of highly educated people with experience in organizing and advocacy, push for a vibrant civil society in the Middle East<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Refer to A. D. Norton (Ed.) (1995) *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Vol. 1 and 2.

<sup>15</sup> It is of interest to notice Asef Bayat's (2002: 19-22) description of the 'quiet encroachment', through which the urban poor in the cities throughout the Middle East improve their life conditions. This highly informal activity targets public space, collective consumption such as water, electricity etc. The illegal economy of street vendors is about survival for the urban poor; at the same time it is collective actions that challenge state authority.



This general trend within the Middle East provides a broader context for describing civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan. The majority of the civil society actors at the focus of this thesis, are individuals from the highly educated urban middle classes. Information availability is indicated as a positive factor for emergence of civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan (Leezenberg, 2003: 157). It was pointed out by informants that those who grew up in the opposition movement, and those who were *Peshmerga* combatants in the mountains fighting against the Baath regime, have a good experience with organization. However, one interviewee pointed out that this is an experience of organization ‘against’ something. To build up a society a different approach is needed (interview with employee at NPA). Furthermore, those persons taking part of civil society projects in Iraqi Kurdistan are mostly from the generation that became adults after the uprising. Hence, the general trend within the Middle East can be interpreted as a development of activism and organization within civil society, as a result of economic dependency, and authoritarian regimes’ declining ability to meet the needs of the people. However, the socio-cultural structure of the ‘neo-patriarchy’ counts for “a peculiar duality, the modern and the patriarchal coexist in contradictory union” (Sharabi, 1988: 8). This I believe is a suitable description of the social context, in which civil society actors conduct their projects, and in which their objectives are forged within Iraqi Kurdistan.

### *V.3. Development, Peacebuilding and Civil Society – Some Critiques*

Kaldor (2003) argues that different versions of the notion of civil society share an underlying assumption that civil society involves individuals’ consent of society’s governance. She describes civil society as “those organizations, groups and movements who are engaged in this process of negotiation and debate about the character of the rules – it is the process of expressing ‘voice’”(2003: 11). The argument that the idea of civil society is connected to a process of expressing ‘voice’ captures one perception of the concept; that it is connected to a participatory process of democratisation. However, there critique of the concept questions who’s ‘voice’ is being expressed.

The claim from Nustad (2003: 103-105) points out that the concept of civil society was introduced to the development discourse as a means to ensure the 'voice' of the underrepresented in developing countries throughout the 1980s and onwards. Yet, a dilemma entered the purpose of the concept. The focus upon grass-roots and people centred development, enabled foreign states to intervene and stipulate donor conditionality on behalf of the people in countries with 'bad' governments. Nustad (2003) claims the result to be that local political realities are being compared against political 'ideals' from the West. In a similar manner, Seckinelgin (2002: 357-358) argues that when the terminology of civil society has more recently been used for 'bringing the people' into the development process in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, the diversity of circumstances and contexts becomes transformed into desired policy outcomes. Thus 'bringing people into development' and to make people act for change, is argued to not be a technical issue of "dealing with people and their organizations" (Seckinelgin, 2002: 358), rather this is a process creating a new organization culture, based on Western sectional divisions.

Correspondingly, Barakat & Chard (2004: 22) state that the development community has adopted a 'narrow and normative' meaning of civil society. The authors critique points at the perception of civil society as being in a confrontational relationship with the state, which denies it to work with the state for consolidating democracy. Furthermore, they point to the Eurocentrism within this practice, arguing that it is used in a manner with cultural bias attached to it, perceiving NGO like organizations at the core of the concept "By excluding the majority of indigenous social formations (institutions) and denying the role of conflict in social change, it is itself profoundly undemocratic" (2004: 23).

Hence, the critique from Nustad (2003), Seckinelgin (2002) and Barakat & Chard (2004), are part of an ongoing debate about the possibility for external agencies to strengthen civil society. It is questioned if this is resulting in the democratisation process intended by development and peacebuilding policy makers. For example, the INGOs that entered Iraqi Kurdistan after the uprising surpassed the state by focusing

on cooperation with LNGOs. This undermined the newly established Kurdistan Regional Government, which might have been a body for democratisation. Yet, as many INGOs withdrew and still are staying outside, the donor money continues to be accessible through projects that 'fit' the donor agenda (Leezenberg, 2000). For example, Seckinelgin's (2002) argument about the creation of Westernised organizational culture, can be argued is the ongoing development within LNGOs in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Moreover, the critique is relevant for peacebuilding, as the role and involvement of development NGOs within humanitarian aid and the peacebuilding field are growing in scope and number. NGOs have become increasingly important actors within international politics during the 1990's<sup>16</sup>. The neo-liberal agenda within the development community has resulted in governmental resources increasingly are channelled through INGO's to areas of peacebuilding implementation. For example, the Norwegian government channels the majority of its development aid and humanitarian relief assistance, its conflict resolution assistance and post-conflict reconstruction, through Norwegian NGO's (Hauge, 2004: 12).

### V.3.1. The Analytical Usefulness of the Concept

The historical outline of the idea of civil society, and the contemporary connotations, describes that it the concept has been used for different objectives at different contexts in time and space. Still, the idea of expressing 'voice' of the underrepresented is embedded within the concept of civil society. However, the critique points to the employment of the concept by the peacebuilding and development enterprise. Civil society becomes a political 'ideal' from the West, and is instrumentally used for desired policy outcomes. The critique has brought about a debate of the analytical usefulness of the concept. The notion of civil society has been referred to as 'analytical hat-stand' upon which people can hang a variety of ideas (White, 1993 in Van Rooy,

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<sup>16</sup> This development began already in the 1980s when funding from the international donor community was made more available for non-state actors. The availability of material resources for non-state actors was due to a paradigm shift in policy making within the international community, where privatisation and neo-liberal approaches to development aid in a larger manner replaced development aid as support to state institutions (Reimann, 2005: 37-38).

1998: 6). Others have questioned the existence of a distinct sphere outside the state and the market. Comaroff & Comaroff (1999: 7) pose the question of “does civil society exist as an antithesis of the state, in struggle with it, or as a condition of its possibility?”. Krohn-Hansen & Nustad (2005) argue that the concept of civil society has proven to be useless for analytical terms, and propose that using dichotomies of state – market - civil society is fundamentally problematic. Not because of the notion of Eurocentrism attached to the concept, but because the separation is not existent in real life (Artexaga, 2003 in Krohn-Hansen & Nustad 2005: 12). To approach the study of the concept of civil society in a productive manner the Comaroff’s propose to study the meanings invoked, symbolism of it, and power within the concept:

“An anthropological optic of this must focus on how the Idea has manifested itself in colonial/post colonial visions of history and modernity how it folds into local conceptions of the emerging global order, how it has infused understandings of moral being, citizenship, community, and polity in a world in which liberal forces, both political and economic, bear an uneven relationship to formal authority and to everyday life: how it resonates with identities, desires, fantasy futures fed, among other things by media images of an increasingly transnational scale; in whose dreams it is an alibi, in whose interest - or disinterest – it is invoked.” (1999: 8).

Along the lines of Lewis (2002: 574) argument “in addition to the breadth of different understandings of civil society, there are also both ‘old’ and ‘new’ understandings of the term”, the outcome of the debate on the analytical usefulness of the concept, is that multiple meanings within the idea leave it less productive as an analytical tool. However, the claim argued for is that if the concept of civil society is less productive as an analytical tool, it is still ‘good to act with’. This claim can be further strengthened by the following quote from Van Rooy (1998: 29) “Moreover, we argue that there are important meanings in the idea and in our attempts to make sense of it, and in those meanings lie inspiration for social change”. The view presented in this thesis is to follow Harpviken & Kjellmann (2004: 4-5) who describe civil society as a *sensitizing* concept that illuminates activities, actors, and processes that are realities ‘on the ground’, which can help understand the role activities and actors play in

peacebuilding. This is so because “ideas carry implications for action” (Van Rooy, 1998: 31).

#### *V.4. Civil Society in Peacebuilding*

Academic research as well as policy oriented documents point out civil society actors as agents of grass-root peacebuilding. In societies experiencing conflict or post-conflict situations, civil society actors have the possibility to, and are making a difference in, addressing the devastation that violence has caused upon society (Abiew & Keating, 2004; Lederach, 2001; Orjuela, 2004; Richmond & Carey, 2005). I would like to return to the quote from Nordstrom (2004: 184) who situates individual's capacities for peace in the midst of conflict: “Peace begins in the front-line action of rebuilding the possibility of self (which violence has sought to undermine) and society (which massacres and destruction have sought to undermine)”. Orjuela (2004: 19) points out that it is consequently argued in conflict resolution literature that solutions cannot be imposed from above or outside, but must include and be relevant for local actors. As such, local civil society is vital in peacebuilding. Moreover, ordinary people are increasingly involved in conflicts as supporters for democratic processes, as well as supporters of warring factions, and the reproducers of social divisions by upholding identity groups in society. Hence, it can be argued that addressing needs expressed at grass-root level are vital for successful outcomes of peacebuilding initiatives.

#### *V.5. Civil Society in Violent Conflict*

It is suggested that armed conflict affects civil society in three ways; firstly, displacement tear up families, communities, and destroys reciprocal networks. Secondly, there are insufficient resources due to looting of assets. Thirdly, terror and de-humanizing as targeted military strategies result in the destruction of the social fabric that is the basis for civil society (Swift, 1996 in Harvey, 1998: 206-207). According to Barakat & Chard (2004: 26) unlike societies that are impoverished by economical or natural crisis, the particularity of conflict stands out by one key aspect: the destruction violence has upon society. The violence of war devastates social relations, which results in fragility and fragmentation of institutions such as family,

local communities and government institutions. Breakdown of trust between humans, and breakdown in the transfer of knowledge between generations, is the key damage of conflict upon society.

Harvey (1998: 208) depicts civil society in situations of armed conflict as simultaneously emerging, being undermined, and contested. This is a process that emerges from the collapse of state structures by war, which affects civil society with an extreme process of disengagement. The disengagement leads to a fallback on primary groupings within society, for example kinship, tribal, religious, and traditional political structures, that serve as coping strategies for people. Civil society is further undermined by military strategies, extreme scarcity and displacement. Local authorities' predatory behaviour contests the space of civil society, while at the local level civil society is strengthened through traditional institutions and the parallel economy. In a similar vein, Orjuela's (2004: 128) study from Sri Lanka describes that the main impediment of civil society activity in the war zone has been military control and repression. Furthermore, fear and violence discourage engagement in leadership roles, as no one wants to 'put out their head'. LINGO activists communicated similar fears to me in Iraqi Kurdistan during informal conversations. In times being to outspoken can be dangerous, and the authorities have threatened activists.

### V.5.1. Civil Society in Iraqi Kurdistan

Civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan emerged after the uprising in 1990. This is because among other things, the former regime was extremely authoritarian and displaced the society in Iraqi Kurdistan through strategies such as the Anfal operation. However, once KDP and PUK became the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, they monopolized civil society. Orjuela (2004: 128) points out that in Sri Lanka the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) has tried to monopolize the state, private sector and civil society. The LTTE are in control of many LINGOs, even though not in an open manner. Within Iraqi Kurdistan, similar developments can be argued for. The PUK and the KDP, in their respective areas, have monopoly on the control over state and civil society. However, of the LINGOs I spoke to only one received funding from the authorities, while international donors fund the

others. Yet, it is required for international and local NGOs to get permission from the authorities to conduct projects.

These developments began after the uprising in 1990. The influx of INGOs and large amounts of humanitarian aid money to Iraqi Kurdistan created a parallel government, because the INGOs coordinated their activities with LNGOs instead of working with the newly established Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The authorities did not engage in reconstruction work, however, they set up a large amount of LNGOs that became lucrative sources of income, and were incorporated into clientelist structures. During the civil war that began in 1994, most INGOs left Iraqi Kurdistan, and the political parties increased their control over humanitarian aid flows. Since the cease-fire in 1998 and implementation of the UN 'oil for food' resolution 986, the region stabilized. The authorities engaged more in infrastructure projects, although responsibility for public health and welfare was largely left to private organizations and INGOs (Graham-Brown, 1999: 217; Leezenberg, 2000: 10-17). Currently, the INGOs are still mainly staying outside Iraq. Nonetheless the LNGOs I had the opportunity to visit could operate with support from international donors. As such, organization and activity outside formal political structures exist, although the authorities partly control these activities.

Additionally, Harvey's (1998:208) argument that armed conflict leads to fallbacks on primary groupings in society is of interest in regards to social organization in Iraqi Kurdistan. Historically within Iraqi Kurdistan tribal groups have played an important role for organization and political power. This is still the case. Indeed, tribes are outside the state yet they have a direct link to the state. Van Bruinessen (1992: 134) argues that the Kurdish tribes were the creations of the states throughout the Ottoman Empire and later the nation states. Tribes loyal to the state upheld border regions and control over peripheral areas. During the 1970s Iraqi Kurdistan experienced demise in traditional tribalism as the main form of socio-political organization. However, during the 1990s when the two major tribal and political 'confederations' KDP and PUK competed for power, a neo-tribal socio-political organization emerged. The KDP and

PUK have their power base partially in primordial loyalties such as allegiances to family, clans and tribes. However, an old fault line in Kurdish society is between tribal and non-tribal groups, as such the power base of the parties is not exclusively tribal. For example, the PUK has since its establishment been characterized by urban left-wing intellectuals. Still, both parties have through systems of patronage established control down to community level, through intermediaries such as *Peshmerga* commandants who have local followers (McDowall, 1997: 385-387). Furthermore, the power of the state during the Baath party rule was increasingly upheld by utilizing tribal identity as a means for control, where access to power were granted to loyal tribes (Baram, 1997). The Baath regime had loyal Kurdish tribes recruited to the National Defence Battalions, so-called *Jas* (donkey) by the Kurds, exercising control in the north (Graham-Brown, 1999: 217). Thus, primary groups such as tribes and clans, and political control through patronage structures, can be argued to be main socio-political characters of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The influx of humanitarian aid money after the uprising exacerbated these structures, which further became institutionalised with the civil war. It can be argued that these developments have also given opportunity for organization outside the party structures of KDP and PUK. The INGOs with their presence and their funding provided this opportunity. Harvey's (1998) argument that civil society is simultaneously emerging, being undermined and contested in times of conflict can be helpful for explaining how civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan developed. Even if the authorities controlled civil society it emerged through a parallel government and the influx of aid money. This process was one of contradictory effects; it can be argued that it has given opportunity for organization outside formal political structures, and a window for change, as people are employed and voluntarily active within this sector. Yet, it did also contribute to an institutionalisation of patronage and neo-tribal structures.

### *V.6. Summary*

The theoretical framework, which has been presented in the two preceding chapters, has illuminated an array of issues concerning peacebuilding, civil society, and the



relevance of these subjects to the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. In this section I will briefly summarize the main points of theory. Following from this, the theoretical framework is applied in analysis of the empirical data from Iraqi Kurdistan, which is presented and critically discussed in the subsequent chapter. In the concluding chapter, answers to the research questions are presented by summarizing the outcome of the application of the theoretical framework in the analysis of the empirical data.

Firstly, by providing definitions of war and peace the circumstances of protracted social conflicts and of peacebuilding were illustrated. Azar's (1990) theory on protracted social conflicts presented a theoretical approach for an understanding of the deprivation of basic human needs as causes for conflict. As such, they are core issues in peacebuilding, since this is about addressing and solving causes for conflict. Secondly, the chapter points out 'political will' and healthy relations between communal identity groups in society, as main obstacles for peacebuilding, and as imperative aspects if peacebuilding is to succeed. As such, the first part of the theoretical framework provided the context of peacebuilding.

Since the focus of this thesis is civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan and the work conducted by them, the next part of the theoretical framework provide a debate about civil society. The concept of civil society can be useful 'to think with' and 'to act with' (Lewis, 2002), hence the first part of the chapter debates the *notion* of civil society. Firstly, the debate demonstrates that the notion of civil society embodies meanings of expressing 'voice' and negotiation over the rules of society. However, critique of the meanings invoked within the concept, and how these ideas are employed in development and peacebuilding, are also presented. Secondly, the notion of civil society is also good 'to act with', which indicates that civil society is about activities and actors, and can be of inspiration for social change. Thus, a discussion of civil society actors in peacebuilding and in conflict situations was provided.

Yet, by turning to what occurs with civil society in conflict situations, the discussion reveals that within the specific context of Iraqi Kurdistan, factors of conflict, economy,

politics and culture have influenced the development of civil society. Contradictory effects have come about from international efforts of development aid that intended to strengthen civil society. The contradictory effects are institutionalisation of neo-tribalism and structures of patronage, which have strengthened the power of the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, simultaneously with providing a window of opportunity for change through enabling organization outside political party structures.

## VI.

### THE CASE: Iraqi Kurdistan

#### *VI.1. Presentation of Empirical Data*

By presenting empirical data from civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan the theoretical framework is connected to the current society in Iraqi Kurdistan. This chapter provides answers to the questions *‘What are the main objectives of people within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan? What obstacles are civil society actors facing in their work? To what degree can it be argued that they have peacebuilding as their goal?’*

The data will be presented in following manner: Firstly, objectives of, and obstacles for, civil society actors are presented by the example of a human rights education project. This project does also illustrate the deprivation of basic human needs in Iraqi Kurdistan. Secondly, wars effect on society is described. Thirdly, civil society actors point at obstacles for their work and for rehabilitation of society at large. Following from this is a description of projects that address root causes of conflicts in Iraqi Kurdistan. Finally, the relation between civil society actors and authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan are described. The development of a political process for peace, and the role of international actors are debated.

The empirical data is connected to the theoretical framework, as the empirical findings are attempted to be interpreted in a ‘thick’ manner. As such, the chapter provides a discussion about civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan, and draws upon the theoretical framework of the thesis. Since this thesis is based upon empirical data gathered in Iraqi Kurdistan, the focus remain on needs in society communicated by the people I met. This does not mean that the current divisions between ethnic or religious groups and needs that are underlying the ongoing conflict within Iraq are not of importance. However, I limit the scope of the thesis to those issues my informants mentioned as important for their work.

As I speak with the persons that I present here as my informants, a common history emerge from their stories. This common history I believe suggest some answers to the questions guiding the research for this thesis. Shared experiences emerge as explanations to which objectives people work for in civil society. The projects they conduct give suggestions to grass-root peacebuilding within Iraqi Kurdistan. This chapter acknowledges the violence and difficulties people face living in societies where war, power struggles, and dictatorship puts marks upon each individual.

### *VI.2. Human Rights Education*

The human rights education project illustrates the collaboration between different actors in civil society, as well as the collaboration between civil society and the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan. As one teacher recounted, the program has influence on attitudes and increased students' awareness. My observation from participating in the human rights classes was that students became able to see their own limitations in society and expressed the feeling of being declined their rights. The students did also actively contribute with ideas of how to change their current situation.

The human rights education project is instigated by NPA and is based upon cooperation with seven LNGOs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Human Rights. The intention is for the project to be transferred to local authorities, with the long-term aim of implementation on national level. The long-term objective as stated in the program evaluation (Human Rights Education Report, 2005) is to 'respect human rights principles in society'. The short-term objectives are 'increasing human rights awareness in society and decreasing violence in schools'. The project was piloted in 18 schools, where the students had one lesson per week with human rights education. After an evaluation the lessons have been expanded to 72 schools. The schools begin in late September, coinciding with the planning of the human rights program. The first 18 schools in Sulaymaniya started their human rights education in

February 2005, one class per week, for their students at all three levels<sup>17</sup>. After an evaluation in April 2005 it was decided that the education should be given to total 72 schools in the directorates of Sulaymaniya, Koya, Ranya, Garmian and Halabja for the school year 2005-2006. The ministries are based in the PUK controlled area. In the KDP controlled part of Kurdistan this education programme has not yet been acted out. This is because until January 2006 there were two separate administrations in Iraqi Kurdistan. However now these administrations are uniting into one single Iraqi Kurdistan administration, and as such the project is expanding to the area where KDP has been in control. Although the long-term aim is to get this project extended to all schools in Iraq as a part of the curricula, the project facilitators have not yet had any response from Baghdad.

During interviews with LNGOs I ask them to tell me about their cooperation within the human rights project:

*“I think that 18 schools in Sulaymaniya is too small, but the budget can help to increase that number. I think we should increase because the project is too little. We give the project to the ministry, but NPA should seriously follow up the project, I think that if we don’t follow it up the ministry will ignore the project, maybe not allow it in the future to be studied. We should follow up the project, and now we are in the middle of the school year and the students don’t have the books yet. The persons handling this in the ministry say maybe next week.”*

*(The NPA employee laughs and says ‘Every week the ministry say this to me’)*

*Employee at LNGO in Sulaymaniya.*

In the development of the human rights project the NPA facilitator is facing some difficulties. Translating human rights curricula from English to Kurdish, and to write about human rights in a broad sense were obstacles in the first phase of the project.

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<sup>17</sup> The school system is divided into primary, intermediary and preparatory stage. The children start school at age six, primary is from first to sixth grade. Intermediary is seven to ninth grade, and preparatory (some also called it secondary) is tenth to twelfth grade.

The Ministry of Education decided which teachers should be teaching the human rights classes. These teachers participated in a training course, but some did not participate in the manner the facilitator requested, *“they did not have interest or believe in human rights, and this was problematic for us”*. After coordination with the Ministry of Education new teachers were found.

With regards to some of the LNGOs, the facilitator faced some problems with commitment to the project:

*“Local organizations say in the first meeting they promised to help NPA in a voluntary way, but unfortunately after implementing project local organizations forget that project and begin to withdraw. Another difficulty is to changing representatives many times and NPA employee have to explain project many times.”*

*Facilitator of human rights project*

The interviews revealed what seems to be a problem of cooperation between the Ministry (of education) and the project. This may have several reasons, such as lack of coordination. The LNGO claimed that NPA as the facilitator of the project should follow up that the Ministry did not forget about the project. This can illustrate that there is not great trust towards the Ministry having proper commitment to the project. This might indicate what was pointed out by the theoretical framework, regarding patronage and clientelist structures within the state bureaucracy. Another issue emphasised is that the facilitator of the human rights project expected voluntary involvement by LNGOs. However, as the quote stated *after implementing the local organizations forget and began to withdraw*, this raises the question of the withdrawal was because of the expectation of voluntary involvement, or if there were other reasons. This can again indicate lack of commitment to the project.

#### VI.2.1. Human Rights Education – Teachers and Students

During visits to schools, the teachers talk about a difficult teaching situation. Due to the lack of school buildings a school day is only 4 hours. At one school the day is

divided to teaching primary classes in the first part of the day and secondary classes in the second part. One lesson is about 35 minutes, but the space is too small. They have made classrooms out of storage rooms, without windows, but it is difficult for the children to sit in these rooms.

The following times when I participated in human rights classes, the students were frustrated over material shortages. The older students did also express their frustration of not being listened to, and students expressed after learning about human rights that their human rights were not fulfilled. Their frustration was let out when I asked them what they would like to do if they could. Some of the answers are presented below:

*“The political parties killed this country, but people say ‘it is ok, it is our political parties’.”*

*“ First awareness of human rights, second coordination between the students. If I only could establish an organization, but the authorities would not allow me”.*

*“Out from your question I want to speak of violation of human rights: last March 16<sup>th</sup> students did not want to let authority to come but we could not do anything.”*

The above quote relates to opposition within the town of Halabja against the authorities. After the Anfal genocide large amounts of aid has been received to the victims of the chemical weapons attack, to rebuild the town and surrounding area of Halabja. Still, the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan are being accused of holding back reconstruction, as landmines still fill the fields surrounding Halabja and rehabilitation has proceeded slowly. On the Memorial Day for the attacks on Halabja, on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2006, violent clashes between police and demonstrators erupted (Ridolfo 2006). The political representatives were not allowed to attend the memorial ceremony, and the memorial building for the victims was looted and burned to the ground. It is difficult to know who instigated this action and why. This is not the focus of this thesis, other than to serve as an indicator of frustration towards the authorities within this town.

Visiting the human rights education program, the teachers pointed also out the lack of books for the human rights education project:

*“Education department made problem with books that were printed in Baghdad, to arrive. Now students begin human rights education without books”*

*Teacher in human rights education*

For the students and teachers another frustrating issue was the lack of schoolbooks in general. Apparently books that are supposed to be free and provided in school end up in the marketplace. Then parents do not have money to buy them, and children end up in school without books.

The aim of the human rights education project is to increase human rights awareness in society (Human Rights Education Report, 2006). Increased awareness is communicated as an objective for changing attitudes in society. Within the context of an interview about the human rights program, a teacher tells about his idea of the impact of the program:

*“In education it is focus on wars, fights, victory. War is portrayed as ending the problems. I observe children they want to buy toys that are weapons, the education influence the behaviour. In general people are more interested with war than peace. There are a lot of problems, the wrong understanding of principles; brave persons are the fighters. This program create influence on change of attitudes like the relation between student and teachers, they talk about the environment instead of weapons. Things start to change. But there are lack of resources of human rights in Kurdistan, the human rights teacher try to translate some things into Kurdish but there are no human rights literature in the school library.”*

*Teacher in human rights education.*



The students in Halabja pointed out the lack of material resources:

*“The author asks: Which HR do you have knowledge of, and which is most important for you? Students answer: Freedom of speech; Rehabilitation; Equality; Civil rights; We have not electricity we cannot study because there are no heaters.”*

*Students in human rights class in Halabja.*

Since ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ most parts of Iraqi Kurdistan have not seen fighting, and are in a phase of rehabilitation. However, material resources are limited in Iraqi Kurdistan (although the scarcity is currently larger in Baghdad area and the south of Iraq) and there is a growing frustration with the slow progress of reconstruction, economic and social rehabilitation. When this subject emerged with informants or in conversations with people in general, a typical comment was *“We have been waiting for ten years now, for ten years we had our own government and still not enough electricity and water”*. The material shortages were evident in schools, hospitals, and in daily life.

#### VI.2.2. Theoretical Implications

From the basic needs approach presented by Azar (1990) the empirical data indicates that the *security needs*, i.e. physical and material well-being, are unsatisfied. This regards electricity to heaters, the lack of school buildings and schoolbooks. The above quotes illustrates that material shortages are part of the daily life in Iraqi Kurdistan at large. There can be several reasons for the lack of resources within this specific human rights project. The informants point at the insufficient coordination between NGOs and the Ministries.

Still, the theoretical framework pointed out the institutionalisation of patronage structures in Iraqi Kurdistan. One reason for the missing schoolbooks for the human rights education project can come from the fact that NGOs are actors outside these structures. Hence, their access to resources is limited. However, the missing schoolbooks can also be a result of lacking coordination between all the actors within

the project. From the basic needs perspective *access needs* regard the access to economic and political decision-making structures. However, the theory emphasizes that deprivation of material needs tend to be a result of deprivation of *access needs*. As such, the argument of NGOs as outside actors being limited in their *access*, and therefore not receive their schoolbooks, is in line with Azar's (1990) theory. However, Azar (1990) argues for the deprivation of *access needs* to ultimately be dependent upon the deprivation of *acceptance needs*. In reference to the empirical data, this appears not to be the case. Rather, the variable of state governance provided by Azar (1990), and the institutionalisation of patronage structures, are more suitable as explanations of the deprivation of *access needs* in the human rights project.

The human rights project has the objective to heighten awareness of human rights, which is intended to change attitudes in society, among students as well as teachers. From the students, their frustration is directed toward those they perceive as neglecting them their rights. As such, it can be argued that the project had the effect of expressing 'voice' from those who are outside the formal political arena. Within the theoretical framework, expressing 'voice' was presented as inherent within the notion of civil society (Kaldor, 2003). Moreover, the project involves both civil society actors and the authorities. According to Barakat et. al. (2004) in their critique towards civil society as the development community deploys it, argues that development organizations do not work with the state for consolidating democracy. Still, as this project involves the work from civil society actors and the authorities, for raising human rights awareness in society, it can be argued for working with the state towards increased awareness of human rights, which might be a part of a democratisation process.

### *VI.3. War's Effect on Society – Legacy of Conflicts*

What has put marks upon each individual, have also put marks on civil society. The atrocities during the former regime affected each person in Iraqi Kurdistan. The strategy of Arabization was implemented to change demographic realities on the ground in Iraq. This was introduced already during General Abdel Karim Qassem's rule around 1960 and pursued onwards by the Baath regime. Arabs loyal to the regime

were settled in multi ethnic areas where oil resources were abundant, such as Kerkuk among others (Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 72). The Arabization campaign forcibly moved ethnic minorities, religious and tribal groups, and people disloyal to the regime from their homes and resettled people in ‘*mujamma'at*’, so called relocation camps. Many people did also ‘disappear’ (Leezenberg 2002: 2; Yildiz, 2004: 62).

*“In Kerkuk before the uprising it was worse for Kurds than in Sulaymaniya. Saddam obliged Kurds to leave Kerkuk to make Arabization of Kerkuk. I had to leave 3 times, but came back. The last time Saddam gave my house to an Arab. I went back after the fall of Saddam, but the Arab did not want to leave this house, he said it was his house, so I sold this house to the Arab for a very little amount of money. I did not know what to do, if I should kill this person.”*

*Kurdish IDP from Kerkuk*

The forced Arabization has resulted in a large amount of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which leads to further tension between ethnic groups. Since the concern of IDPs future is not addressed it leads to frustration towards the authorities. In article 136 in the Iraqi constitution the resolution of the question of Kerkuk is mentioned, yet it postpones any solution of the question until 2008. The Iraqi Property Claims Commission has begun a slow process of compensation, and this delay escalates tensions (UNESCO, 2005).

The Arabization was a Baath regime strategy to deal with the minorities of Iraq. A further brutal strategy was the Anfal genocide commanded from Baghdad during the mid 1980's.

*“Politics and people. Two things very important to remember: not to forget the criminal acts that were made, the genocide. Focus on for example Pakistani earthquake where 5000 people died, but Halabja is different. This was part of strategy of Saddam to wipe out the people.”*

*Employee at LNGO. Survivor of the chemical attack on Halabja 16 March 1988.*

The gross human rights violations and systematic destruction of society has left scars in peoples' lives. The following quote illustrates the motivation for rehabilitation of society:

*“In 86-88 I was in prison and many of my friends get death penalty in the court, from the former regime. My life in the prison was like...(the interviewee shakes his head slowly)... 300 artists died in prison, also our nation. All individuals in Kurdish society face violence to their rights. My friend saw chemical bombs in Halabja, so as individuals we faced the biggest violence because of the former regime. So we tried hard to avoid create another dictator. Also we saw the civil war. Also in the civil war we focus on peace and living together. There is a universal right of human being and we should focus on this now. One of the duties of NGO is the increase of freedom and democracy.”*

*Employee and theatre performer at LNGO in Sulaymaniya.*

The Arabization, the Anfal campaigns, and the human rights violations are difficult memories for people, and have left severe scars within the social fabric of society. The Arabization policies were mostly experienced in the areas where the oil resources are found. Cities such as Kerkuk, Khanaqin, and Mosul are in the current conflict more violent than Sulaymaniya, which is to a larger degree Kurdish dominated. The following quote is an example of the stressed relations between communal identity groups in Kerkuk:

*“In former regime it was very bad. Now better, Kurds have increased in numbers the relations are ok. Turkmen relations not too bad, some disliking. If you live in Kerkuk you feel this dislike, and no one sure of their future. If you are there for one day you may not feel it but living there the feeling is strong. Dividing of the peoples' are according to ethnic identities. Also schools and neighbourhoods are completely divided. Kurds cannot go to their places in the city, for example Kurdish taxi drivers*

*don't go to Arab areas in the afternoon, they are afraid of violence, some Kurds have been killed in these areas.”*

*Kurdish IDP from Kerkuk.*

Within the area of Sulaymaniya and Halabja, the conflict that began in the early 1990's between the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) and the political parties KDP and PUK is also of relevance for the work now conducted by civil society. The civil war that was fought between these actors did further constrain society. The PUK together with U.S. military did in the beginning of the war in 2003 make an offence against the remaining IMK fraction, the Ansar el Sunnah, who was established in the mountains bordering to Iran. They allegedly drew the group into Iran, where they are still based, and according to some of my informants they are still active. The civil war followed earlier divisions in Iraqi Kurdish society between KDP and PUK, with the new actors of IMK. This movement apparently gained support from the more radical movements for political Islam such as the Muslim Brothers from Egypt, among others. When asking how the IMK got local support I received the answer that the Islamic groups within this movement (there were both militant and non-militant fractions within this movement) did provide social services to the population of the villages in those areas they controlled. They provided those basic material needs that the PUK and KDP (depending on who was in control over the specific area) did not provide (McDowall, 1997: 386-387; Leezenberg, 2003: 152; Interview with LINGO in Sulaymaniya).

*“About Peace promotion project in Hawraman, it was hatred, divisions in society, the IMK members worked to keep this society isolated not allowing visitors from any other organizations only World Food Programme to get the minimum necessities.”*

*NPA employee Sulaymaniya.*

### VI.3.1. Theoretical Implications

Analysing the experiences that interviewees communicate provide an understanding of impediments faced by society. The damage violence has had upon individuals and

society, stem from a past legacy of conflicts. The former regime strategies towards Kurdish and other ethnic minorities within Iraq entailed gross human rights violations and genocide. It can be argued that the former regimes political dominance was acted out through the oppression of other communal groups. As a result of this the tension between Kurds, Turkmen's and Arabs are heightened in areas where Arabization was most fiercely executed. Furthermore, once Iraqi Kurdistan became a semi-autonomous region in 1990, civil war between political fractions over territorial control further damaged societal relations.

Returning to Azar (1990) and the basic needs theory, the violence and conflicts deprived people of their *acceptance needs* i.e. recognition of identity. This led to the deprivation of both the *security needs* and the *access needs* for those groups who were targeted by violence and conflict. The rationale behind the strategies from the former regime was among other things to control economic resources, since the large oilfields within Iraq are in the area of Kerkuk. Again, Azar's theory emphasizes the regime type in countries experiencing protracted social conflict. In this case, it was an extremely authoritarian regime, employing severe violence and predatory behaviour.

Kerkuk is often referred to as the 'little Iraq' since this area historically has been the home of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and smaller Christian communities. Leezenberg (2005: 644) points out that ethnic hostility in Iraq is mostly from above (and sometimes from abroad), i.e. from the political leadership of different parties, and rarely starts at the grass-root level. This argument can hold broader generalization, since it was pointed out in chapter I.3. that ethnic identity is socially constructed, and in conflict situations ethnic identity tends to become salient. Usually, this involves a process where leaders use identity instrumentally for obtaining material and political advantages (Ferguson, 2003: 19). Regarding the civil war, it is indicated that the support for the IMK was partially from the provision of resources to local people. This again illustrates how fundamental satisfaction of needs is, and that by providing social services political fractions can ensure support from the grass-root levels.

However, for current violence to diminish the relations between communal identity groups in Kerkuk, and in the area of Sulaymanyia and Halabja where the civil war was mainly fought, require attention as part of a peacebuilding strategy. The theoretical framework presents civil society as important for peacebuilding at grass-root level (Lederach, 2001; Orjuela, 2004 among others). Peacebuilding here is understood as the ‘negative’ task to prevent relapse to overt violence and the ‘positive’ tasks of aiding national recovery and furthering eventual removal of underlying causes of internal war (following from Miall et al, 2000). Although, the data indicates that it is at the political leadership level where hostilities between communal groups are instigated. Hence, within a peacebuilding strategy in Iraqi Kurdistan, it is at this level relations need to change.

The following chapter provide a closer look at obstacles faced by civil society actors in their projects. These obstacles shed light upon how the issue of ‘politics’ influence society.

#### *VI.4. Obstacles*

*“People here are in general pragmatic, they manage to live with almost everything”*  
*Employee at NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

Actors in civil society meet various obstacles when carrying out their projects. Throughout several of the interviews a general subject was the obstacle of ‘politics’. The following quote is in line with Leezenberg’s (2005: 644) argument that ethnic hostility in Iraq is mostly being introduced from political leadership:

*“People are passive in making things better. In life and relationships people live together and are ready to share life with Kurds and Arabs, as a community ready to live, but politics make it difficult. The future of Kerkuk may solve many problems Kerkuk is the ‘small Iraq’. And again the Americans have their own agenda.”*  
*Employee at NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

Thus, obstacles that are met in daily lives of my informants, and what is also faced in their work, points to the political situation in Iraqi Kurdistan. The following quote refers to the limited freedom of expression and as such a breach of human rights within Iraqi Kurdistan.

*“I believe situation of human rights is bad. Nature of authority want to extend its power on people without speaking of human rights. Personally I had been working with human rights issues in major political parties. I cannot say we worked for human rights like now. We try to change something, but we failed. Because of the system of the political parties. System and you cannot work freely. At that time in – 98, situation economically bad, many people cannot speak freely because afraid of their salary to be cut. Major impact to take salary away from people. People cannot work or speak freely at this time.”*

*Employee at LNGO Sulaymaniya.*

Asking about civil society in Kurdistan, I got the following answer from an employee at the NPA:

*“System is the obstacle. It is not possible to criticise it, other regional actors try to influence civil society actors for their own purposes. Because of this the government needs to control civil society they say. And it is true to a certain extent but not a good situation for civil society. Iraq is unstable, and the state is weak, which is an opportunity for civil society to get stronger”.*

The fact that regional actors try to influence civil society actors for their own benefit is referred to as an obstacle. The ‘system’ and ‘politics’ are referred to as obstacles, this I interpret as the degree of control exercised by the authority over civil society organizations. The amount of control might also be related to the influence of regional actors, at least it seems to be an excuse. One quote speaks about the critical economic situation in 1998, which contributed to people not openly criticizing those who had the control over their livelihoods. The economic situation is far more positive today, yet



news reports and academic research stress that too much criticism of the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan is still not tolerated. Although, the sanctions might not be openly violent, sanctions such as taking away salary are effective in a society where the bulk of the population are financially dependent on the political parties, unemployment rates are 50%, and resources are allocated by the state.

#### VI.4.1. Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework and the discussion of civil society in conflict situations related to similar issues. One example provided from Orjuela (2004), described that obstacle for civil society in conflict is military control and threats towards activists. Leezenberg (2005: 640-641) argues that the reason for the persistence of this system within Iraqi Kurdistan is the institutionalisation of clientelist structures and patronage relations, which have been strengthened by domestic conflicts and continuation of different forms of scarcity.

Again, turning to Azar's theory (1990), the regime type and legitimacy are important within protracted social conflicts. It can be argued that control over civil society activism in Iraqi Kurdistan might lead the regime to a crisis of legitimacy, which can lead to further conflict. Moreover, 'politics' relate to structures institutionalised in society by conflict. This is strengthened by the argument from Nordstrom (2004) who claims that the shadow economy that is introduced in times of war, continues after the war is over because of its illegal nature. Hence, it can be argued that the systems of clientelism, and the fallback on primary groups in society, might have been institutionalised by the continuous conflicts, and therefore persist even after violence has stopped. People are being sanctioned when demanding change from those in power. Making people afraid of their livelihood (since people are dependent upon the state for allocation of resources) result in limited participation in civil society, and a limited demand for change. The quote describing people as 'pragmatic' is an indicator of limited incentives for activism.

*VI.5. Community Building – Addressing Underlying Causes of Conflict?*

The legacy of past experiences can be seen in projects implemented by civil society actors. The objectives of the projects are associated with impediments faced by civil society actors, commented above. One project concerns the issue of developing peaceful coexistence between people of different communal identity groups, through a theatre play that is presented in different areas throughout Iraqi Kurdistan:

*“About our play: The forgiving between political parties and different religions. All is ten plays. The way of presenting the content of the play: The first is to living together in Kerkuk, Khanaqin and Arbil. We have it now in Kerkuk. The actors are from different nations; Turkmen, Arab, Kurd. They have their national dress concentrate on areas of multi ethnic. How we respect each other and differences between us. The political issue on this question, there is many families married between the nations, so the response from the people is high. Using negotiation and discussion rather than violence. For example all the nations must say that Kerkuk belongs to us, we create relations among them and in the end they must compromise and live together in Kerkuk. A humanist message, we are all human.”*

*Theatre performer and employee at LNGO in Sulaymaniya*

The peace promotion project implemented by NPA and local partner organizations addressed divisions in society. The participants were from different tribes, clans, religious and political parties. This way the project gathered different local civil society actors. In the first stage this project was made in the Hawraman area, where the IMK previously had control. About the participants in this project I was told:

*“Differences in class structures in society, but even if a person was poor if he/her was a person with high reputation in society he/her was to join the project, as for example a person who was a Peshmerga who had created a history for himself. Selected respected people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, into high level training groups. 2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Problem solving: How to solve community problems. 2 clans were fighting and the heads of the clans were participating in the class. They*

*went to the location of the conflict and because they come together asking the conflict to stop their followers stop conflicting. Political parties are also location for conflict, and the groups visited the different parties KDP, PUK, Iraqi Communist Party, and United Islamic Kurdistan party.”*

*Employee at NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

The above quote inform about the approach to community building. This project was a pilot project and at the time of my visit it was already finished. I did not have the possibility to visit and talk to the participants. Still, it illustrates that by involving people with good reputation in their local community the project aimed at strengthening peaceful relations between different groups within the community. For the organizations involved, the experiences from this project enabled them to start a similar project in Kerkuk.

*“3rd stage: Kerkuk: Initiative different because of the security situation. Kurdish, Turkmen, and Arab “teams” of supervisors from these different ethnic groups. They arranged events like sports, opening events, interview in TV, seminars, chess-games where people participated without thinking on their ethnicity. (The teams were multi ethnic and multi religious working outside Kerkuk). 4rth stage: Inside Kerkuk. Youth organizations. The leaders of different organizations participated in training course and then these people went back and gave to their organizations. Focus on youth because they are the most receptive for both positive and negative influence. The peace promotion project dependent on the people that are a part of the conflict. For example people may think ‘I’m different from you and I have to stay different because that is god’s will’. Organization membership is different as well: Turkmen organizations are the most extremist in resisting the peace promotion project, especially the political parties. Normal people however, are living together. For example in weddings, you hear one Turkmen, one Arab, and one Kurdish song. The same with dances etc. In general people live together but they are not active.”*

*Employee at NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

This quote describes first of all the aim of those involved in the project, to develop peaceful relations that bridge group identities that in the current situation are polarizing relations between ethnic groups. The project focuses on youth because they are receptive for influence. Secondly, it communicates the view of this person on what he believes might be a general attitude in society; that people in general do not actively take part in civil society.

### VI.5.1. Theoretical Implications

The project initiated by civil society actors address obstacles faced by society, that stem from the past conflicts. As pointed out in the theoretical framework, conflict affects civil society through the damage that violence has upon social relations and society. Violence damages the social fabric that is basis for civil society, and as institutions such as local community, family and government is fragmented, there is a fallback on primary groupings. Tribal and political structures become coping strategies for people (Barakat & Chard, 2004; Harvey, 1998; see chapter on 'civil society in violent conflict'). The empirical data describes that civil society actors in times after conflict, have the objective of working for rehabilitation of the damage violence and conflict has made upon society. There is an effort to change relations between conflicting groups in society, and the community building initiative promotes peaceful dialogue between the groups.

In lines with the basic needs theory, the consideration of these issues can be argued to be peacebuilding, since the focus is upon root causes of conflicts. In Hawraman, the project gathered people from leader positions in society, which was argued for as imperative for peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan. Still, the outcome of that project is uncertain, and currently the focus is turned towards youth organizations. By addressing issues of community building and peaceful coexistence between communal identity groups it can be argued that the projects conducted by civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan address peacebuilding issues.

#### *VI.6. Creating a Legitimate Political Process for Peace*

How should removal of underlying causes of conflict be addressed by civil society? The former regime is deposed, and the Kurds are among the new power holders in Iraq. Nevertheless, actors within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan point at ‘politics’ as impediments for their work. Within the theoretical framework ‘political will’ and political processes that have legitimacy, and therefore manages multiple crisis and disputes between the members of a society, without evolving into violent conflict, are emphasized as vital for peacebuilding. Although, Kumar (2001) claim that these developments can emerge outside a formal political arena, for later to be incorporated into formal politics. By turning to further description of civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan, the relationship between civil society actors and the political authorities are described, and it is argued that proper relations are emerging from outside the formal political arena.

##### VI.6.1. A Conference on Democracy

At the Sheraton Hotel in Erbil, the political capital of Iraqi Kurdistan and one of the oldest cities in the world, I attended a conference on “Democracy in Kurdistan” in November 2005. The conference was organized by a LINGO and was held on the top floor of the five-star hotel. The panoramic view of the city revealed the old city walls from the time of the Assyrian Empire that now had a big Kurdish flag on them. The city stretched widely and there were mostly low houses, many with plastic on the flat roofs to protect them from rain, held there by old car tires and plastic bags filled with sand. These houses may have been newly built, yet some of the other new buildings were like small palaces, telling of the business optimism and fast money that can be earned here.

At the conference I sat at a table together with some of the staff from NPA. The room was full of people, some were from LINGOs, some were from the major political parties KDP and PUK, and the honorary guest was an older gentleman from the Kurdish Institute in Paris. In the middle of the room a member of the LINGO presented a survey they had made with 200 persons about participation in political issues,

accountability with the state authorities and other indicators of democracy. The conference was in Kurdish but one of the NPA staff translated the comments for me. The survey concluded with assessing democracy in Kurdistan as weak and the presenter said that the responders were troubled by the amount of corruption and the limited access they had to influence politics. After the presentation the floor was open for comments and discussion. Several persons from the political parties sounded offended in their comments. One person made the following comment *“the fact that you are having this conference is evidence of democracy in Kurdistan”*. One man said, *“what kind of uneducated people gave these negative answers to your questions, they have no education”*. Those participants who did not agree were shaking their heads and saying *“How can he say that we have no democracy”*. In the end one man whom I was told is the head of parliament said;

*“Terror is a great difficulty for building civil society. In a comparison with neighbouring countries, they have not been democratised because of their war with Israel. Here it is not possible to have democracy before Iraq’s future is decided. PUK and KDP should come together in the same list to make people aware. The Parliament should have a ‘check effect’ on the government. We should not allow those who don’t believe in democracy to work in the democratic system”*.

This event describes how civil society actors, by arranging an arena for communication, succeeded in entering a dialogue about governance and the rules of society with representatives of the political authorities. Some of the participants at the conference were from high positions within the political system. As the comment from the person who is head of parliament pointed out, democratisation seems to be an ideal, yet the instability of the transitional phase Iraqi society is contained by at the moment, renders control over society a high priority for the authorities. Secondly, I did also perceive an elitist mentality in the comments from the political representatives, that the critique raised from the survey must have come from uneducated people. Class divisions are sharp within Iraq and throughout the Middle East, and status differences go along the lines between rural and urban, educated and uneducated, rich and poor,

hence this comment makes me draw such a conclusion. However, it can also indicate that receiving critique in public is not common, and therefore this was met defensively.

What does this example tell about relations between the authorities and civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan? It can be claimed that there exists a political dialogue between civil society and the authorities regarding governance in Iraqi Kurdistan. In this example it is instigated by civil society and can provide a description of how a legitimate political process could emerge.

#### VI.6.2. Relations Between Civil Society and the Authorities

The theoretical framework debates the notion of civil society as inspiration for change (Van Rooy, 1998), and that civil society is useful 'to act with'. However, the data has exposed that civil society activity is being sanctioned from the authorities, and therefore might have limited the participation of people in civil society.

*"We see a slow shift from being passive to becoming active. This is a long process, and the fear of being sanctioned is still there, only less. Now there is space for a opposition, but people are wary with what they tell to whom"*

*Employee NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

One argument advanced by the civil society actors had the common objective of increasing awareness in society. For example, the issue of awareness as a result of the overall work conducted by NPA was clearly stated in one interview:

*"In Iraq NPA has focus on democracy and participation. Empowerment is a concept that is everywhere, everything is to be 'empowered'. But participation requires a certain level of consciousness. Awareness as an indicator; that one increase participation and change from always being told and instructed how things should be done to people thinking critically on their own."*

*Employee NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

Democratisation indicates room for opposition and dialogue over the rules of society. Returning to the theoretical framework, the definition provided by Kaldor (2003: 11) that describe civil society as “those organizations, groups and movements who are engaged in this process of negotiation and debate about the character of the rules – it is the process of expressing ‘voice’”, is consistent with the data from Iraqi Kurdistan. It can be argued that NPA and LNGOs convey the aim of increasing awareness in society, which might have the intention of empowerment that could lead to further action taken for changing the status quo, and could contribute to a legitimate political process.

#### *VI.7. The Role of International Actors*

The critique raised towards the concept of civil society points at the development community’s operations for strengthening civil society, which is intended to contribute to a process of democratisation. Yet, it has the effect of establishing a Westernised organization culture, and as such does not meet local political realities. This aspect is of interest when looking at the cooperation between international and local NGOs in Iraqi Kurdistan. Regarding how different INGOs handle their cooperation with local partners one LNGO provide following answer

*“We have good relations with NPA, discuss ideas in team with special target group and later with NPA. Also NPA has received ideas from local NGO's. United States NGO's prepare all projects themselves and want just local NGO to implement it, and LNGO's focus much on emergent issues.*

*Employee LNGO in Sulaymaniya.*

At NPA they also indicated how international donors address their partners. For NPA some of the funding is provided from UN agencies, however within the UN there are different approaches according to the departments. The Iraqi Trust Fund is established by the UN and the World Bank to provide money for rehabilitation projects, but the critique raised from NGOs working inside Iraq is that there are no mechanisms on how



to assess projects and needs ‘on the ground’. As the UN is situated in Amman, it has no physical control over what types of activities are needed in the Iraqi (or as in this case Iraqi Kurdistan) society. UN have pre-decided categories of areas where projects are to be implemented, and the critique from NPA point at making up categories without knowing the actual need in society result in a less efficient way of spending resources. Neither can the international community assess what the needs in Iraq are, and how the Iraqi context might influence outcomes of projects.

#### VI.7.1. Cooperation Between NPA and LNGOs

NPA cooperates with different actors in their work in Iraq, but mostly together with LNGO’s. The local organizations are chosen by various criteria; NPA did a global partnership survey in which they found that it is important to have partner organizations that are *representative*. About being representative in Iraqi Kurdistan one employee at NPA gives following comment:

*“This is difficult to find here. To find grass-root activism and organizations with own goals (or objectives) that does not only copy. There is a copying culture here, which is a legacy of the Middle East patriarchal society, but also the extremely authoritarian regime Iraq has a history of that did not give any space for personal initiatives”*

Being *representative* is intended to secure support from ordinary people. The partners of NPA must share their overall goal, and different criteria are used when analysing partnership. As I sit and talk to one of the department directors in NPA I am given an example of one criterion that is assessed when NPA evaluates a partner:

*“Wisdom and philosophy of the partner organization is important. NPA often choose to work with those organizations that are overlapping in interests and are close in vision and philosophy. On the far end one may say the political authorities are, but sometimes NPA work with those organizations close to that end if they see this is for the greater benefit of the community”*

Within the international strategy document (Norwegian People's Aid, 2003), the position of NPA in regard to state authorities is pointed out as working in partnership with civil society, that is "groups, organizations and institutions between the state and the citizen".

*"NPA try to find organizations that are politically independent but there is an act of balancing there as well. Are they too independent they might represent a very small population. It is also very difficult being independent from the political parties, but organizations can vary in degree of dependency".*

*Employee NPA in Sulaymaniya.*

International actors have different strategies in their cooperation with local actors. NPA as an international actor has only local staff at its department in Sulaymaniya (the one expatriate is the person who is resident representative from Norway). This indicates good knowledge of local needs, and about recognizing which groups to target in their work for being representative. Still as an organization, NPA seeks to affiliate themselves with likeminded organizations, who are situating themselves as far away from the authorities. The work that both NPA and LNGOs conduct for increased awareness can be argued also to relate to the question of increasing independence within society from political parties.

#### VI.7.2. Theoretical Implications

Is the observation of civil society as the critique points it out? My interpretation puts forward the argument that NGOs are perceived as being at the core of the idea of civil society when it comes to international donors. I would argue that since money for projects come from donors, international donor conditionality dictates what kind of projects that are designed, and what areas are emphasised (such as empowerment and awareness raising). However, unlike the critique from Barakat & Chard (2004: 22) that claim that by adopting a 'narrow and normative' view of civil society the development community does not work with the state for consolidating democracy, my proposal in reference to Iraqi Kurdistan is that although NPA and LNGOs perceive themselves as

far away from the state, they do cooperate with the state, and thus might with small steps contribute to a legitimate political process. However, the data indicates that within INGOs there are different approaches to this matter. One example of this is one quote that stated that U.S. Aid is only interested in local partners who implement their projects. Hence, as the data indicates, in general the international approach to development and peacebuilding through INGOs and the UN, is not ideal. Clearly, knowledge of the local political and social context is required, and involvement of local stakeholders, as the experience from the flow of aid money to Iraqi Kurdistan in the early 1990's also indicated.

The theoretical framework pointed out that local ownership and initiatives that have relevance for people experiencing conflict are required for peacebuilding. The democracy conference could be an example of how a legitimate political process could emerge from within the society, and as such entails cooperation of local stakeholders. The focus of civil society actors to raise awareness might additionally contribute to such a process. This would be in line with Kumar's (2001) argument that for peacebuilding a legitimate political process can emerge outside the formal political arena. However, it requires ultimately that such a process is taken into the formal political arena, hence the basic requirement is the existence of 'political will'. As the empirical data has explored, the concluding analysis would be that regarding the obstacles faced by civil society activism, and structures institutionalised by conflict, 'political will' is not yet present within Iraqi Kurdistan.

## VII.

### CONCLUSION

#### *VII.1. Revisiting the Research Questions*

Within this thesis, three main questions have guided the research. These questions were formulated to explore peacebuilding within the context of Iraqi Kurdistan, from the perspective of civil society actors. The research questions are as follows:

*What are the main objectives of people within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan?*

*What obstacles are civil society actors facing in their work?*

*To what degree can it be argued that they have peacebuilding as their goal?*

This chapter will provide a summary of the answers of the research questions. The answers can be seen as a summary of the theoretical framework and its relevance to the empirical data.

#### VII.1.1. What are the main objectives of people within civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan?

The human rights education project has the objective of raising awareness about human rights in society. The students that are the target group of this project, express that once they learn about their human rights, they realize their human rights are not satisfied. In Halabja the students were outspoken about this. They wanted to demand their rights. As such it can be argued that their awareness was raised, and also their incentives for activism, i.e. inspiration for changing the status quo. The teachers participating in the project hoped for change of attitudes within society at large. One comment from a teacher was that he wished to reduce violence by teaching about human rights. For the participants in the project, it can be assumed that the long-term objective would be to enhance human rights throughout society, since human rights standards are not being adequately met in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Another objective of civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan is to improve relations between communal identity groups, especially in those areas where the former regime's strategies of Arabization were most fiercely executed, and in those areas where the civil war has damaged relations between communal groups. Projects conducted by civil society actors in these areas target both youth groups, and people from leader positions in the local communities. The objective is to enhance peaceful dialogue between polarized communal identity groups.

Furthermore, it can be argued that civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan have the objective of increasing participation in civil society of people at the grass-root level. The empirical data indicated that people in general do not participate in civil society. However, a comment to this is that when informants pointed out lack of participation, I believe they intend *advocacy* work, which is aiming to change societal relations. Hence, those civil society actors at the focus of this thesis were involved in advocacy work for the enhancement of democracy in Iraqi Kurdistan. The example of the conference in Arbil provides a description of how civil society actors establish an arena for dialogue and negotiation with the authorities, regarding governance and the rules of society.

From a theoretical point of view, the objectives of civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan are coherent with Lewis (2001) description of NGOs as organizations that work for human rights, development, and social change. That people organize in civil society within Iraqi Kurdistan can be argued to relate to former experiences of authoritarian rule. Gross human rights violations in the past may inspire people for raising awareness in society of human rights. Furthermore, the civil war erupted within the Kurdish society, and resentment over the power struggle inside the Kurdish fractions also encouraged people for organization outside these political structures. Even if international and local NGOs provide opportunity for jobs outside the state sector, this was not mentioned as a factor of civil society organization to me in any interview. However, I believe it is of importance, since NGOs receive money from donors this provides economic opportunities that the local actors might not provide.

Peacebuilding theories presented civil society actors as agents of building peace on the grass-root level. Peacebuilding aims at 'positive peace' as the view of Galtung (1996) argument, that peace is about the existence of social structures that enable all individuals to develop their full potential. A precondition of this is the absence of inequality, injustice, oppression and the maintenance of social, political, and economic conditions. Furthermore, Lederach (2001) argues for the importance of developing a dialogue between local level actors and elite level actors, for a lasting peace. This thesis has established the claim that addressing needs at the grass-root level is vital for peacebuilding to be relevant for the actors' involved. The objectives of civil society actors presented above consequently aim for positive peace, as they address issues of peacebuilding that are of relevance for people at the grass-root level.

Subsequently, the second research question addresses the obstacles faced by civil society actors in their work. These obstacles are additionally further illustrative of the objectives presented above.

### VII.1.2. What obstacles are civil society actors facing in their work?

Within the projects described in the case study, and from the historical and social context of Iraqi Kurdistan, core issues have been presented throughout the thesis that consequently are obstacles faced by civil society actors. These were expressed in different settings throughout my field research. The overall obstacle is inadequate material resources. This was evident in the human rights education project in the case of materials and school buildings. However, lack of resources was evident throughout society, as the surroundings have marks of the decades of conflict and scarcity. Electricity and water are provided in limited supplies, allocated only for some hours per day.

Moreover, an additional obstacle was that rehabilitation of society proceeds slowly, which generates frustration among people. What further exacerbates frustration is the issue of corruption. One example is the schoolbooks that end up in the marketplace.

The frustration is turned towards the authorities, since it is they who are seen as responsible for these matters. However, since freedom of expression is limited, and sanctions are directed towards those who raise critique towards the authorities, civil society activity is hampered. People fear violence. Some informants referred to this as the obstacle of 'politics'. 'Politics' are also perceived as an obstacle that heightens tensions between communal groups, and as such further violence in society. However, an outcome of this approach is the question of *why* these obstacles are persistent in Iraqi Kurdistan?

Hence, to get a better understanding of the obstacles met by civil society actors in their work, I found Azar's (1990) theory on protracted social conflicts useful for analysis. Azar argues that individual and communal physical survival and well-being are the most obvious ontological human needs, and they are dependent upon the satisfaction of material needs. However, these basic needs are not evenly or justly met, and grievances stemming from the deprived satisfaction of needs are expressed through communal identity. Marginalized groups tend to receive reduced amounts of resources as distribution is unequal, especially in societies where resources are scarce. Hence, satisfaction of needs relate to participation in economic and political decision-making , which is decisive of the amount of *access* possessed by groups and individuals. Marginalized groups in this case are the civil society actors, as the example from the schoolbooks that never arrived from Baghdad illustrated. As such, a short conclusion of obstacles faced by civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan points at the deprivation of *security needs* and *access needs*.

However, Azar's (1990) argument is that *access* to economic decision-making and political authority is related to the communal identity of groups. In reference to the obstacles faced by civil society actors, the issue of communal identity as the cause for deprivation of needs is not an apt description. I would rather put forward the argument in line with Azar, that the satisfaction of needs is based upon access to economic and political decision-making, yet the causes for the unequal distribution of resources in Iraqi Kurdistan are structures of patronage and clientelism that are institutionalised by

protracted conflicts. This argument is provided by Leezenberg (2005), who states that conflict shape society and strengthen structures that benefit a few, while majority of the population experience scarcity. Furthermore, this argument is strengthened by the description of how the flow of aid money into Iraqi Kurdistan after the uprising in 1990 exacerbated structures established by protracted conflicts. Institutionalisation of structures that loot resources after conflict was further emphasized by Nordstrom's (2004) description of the *shadows of war*.

However, these structures did not appear solely through conflicts, they are part of a complex interaction of several factors that mark the region of the Middle East. From a socio-cultural perspective the theory of 'neo-patriarchy' (Sharabi, 1988) is referred to for an explanation of the socio-cultural structure in the Middle East. This theory illuminates factors that can serve as conditions to current obstacles met by civil society actors. Characteristics of the neo-patriarchal society are for example social fragmentation; the family, clan, and tribe are the unit of organization as opposed to civil society or nation. Furthermore, social relations are within an authoritarian organization characterized by domination and paternalism. The 'neo-patriarchal' society developed from economic and cultural dependence on the West, and authoritarian regimes. Moreover, in lines with this theory, Azar (1990) states that economic dependency and underdevelopment are explanatory of the deprivation of basic human needs, and escalation of conflict. The 'neo-patriarchal' social structure is inherently dualistic, where the modern and the patriarchal coexists in contradictory union. As such, obstacles faced by civil society actors can be conditioned by this dualism; civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan emerges yet is held back by socio-cultural structures.

Moreover, 'politics' as an obstacle faced by civil society actors refer to the degree of control exercised by the authorities over civil society, and the general restriction of freedom of expression in society. By turning to the last research question, the concern of 'politics' is advanced, and debated from a peacebuilding perspective.



VII.1.3. To what degree can it be argued that they have peacebuilding as their goal?

In the outset of this thesis it was determined that peace cannot develop if the rehabilitation of society is not there as a base to build peace upon (Nordstrom, 2004). This base is made from people 'on the ground' within conflicts. Yet, peace is a political matter, since it is the elites within society that decide over the future of people, i.e. the aim of peace must exist at the political level, and it has to recognize the facts on the local level, and work together with these.

Hence, academic research point out 'political will' and specific political aims as the distinguishing character of peacebuilding, and as imperative for successful peacebuilding (Miall et. al., 2000; Kumar, 2001). For the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, it is established that specific political aims of peacebuilding and 'political will' are lacking. However, it is acknowledged that the reason for this might be that there are other more pressing issues (Barakat et.al., 2004). One key aspect indicated here is that the lack of 'political will' can also result from relations between communal identity groups. This aspect is emphasized by Azar (1990), as a root cause for protracted social conflict. As such, addressing relations between communal identity groups is vital within peacebuilding.

Since peacebuilding regard addressing and removing the underlying causes of conflict, it can be argued that civil society actors are addressing issues that are at the core of conflicts, through their projects. The projects conducted by civil society address divisions in society and promote peaceful coexistence. Also, issues such as justice and awareness are communicated through human rights education. Still, peacebuilding requires a political process that is devoted to enhance peaceful relations between individuals and groups in society (Kumar, 2001). Consequently, the projects implemented by civil society actors have the potential of building peace. Yet, as long as this is not an outspoken goal, and thus is not specifically aimed at, it cannot be argued that they have peacebuilding as their direct goal.

Furthermore, civil society in conflict situations is simultaneously contested, undermined and emerging (Harvey, 1998). Political authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan exercise control over civil society actors. However, civil society actors contest these structures and the control, as civil society is emerging with the gradually stabilizing situation within Iraqi Kurdistan. It might be claimed that civil society is emerging through participation by for example, youth groups and students. These groups indicate that they are becoming aware of human rights and express their need for changing the status quo. Another example can be connected to Kaldor's (2003) argument of civil society 'expressing voice'. That is, civil society actors engage in negotiations over the rule of society, as the example of the democracy conference illustrated.

In reference to the critique raised towards the concept of civil society, the critique points at the instrumental employment of the concept in development and peacebuilding policy from international actors; aiming for it to lead to democratisation and providing the 'voice' of the underrepresented people. Yet, the effect is not so much enabling of 'voice'. Rather, the effect is a creation of Westernised organizational culture. Additionally, the employment of the idea makes civil society organizations to work against the state instead of with it in a profoundly undemocratic manner. The core of civil society actors within this thesis is NGOs that to a certain extent oppose the state. However, by working together with the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, both state and civil society actors influence each other. It might be argued that cooperation between these different groups can enhance development of legitimate political processes in Iraqi Kurdistan, and as such contribute to peacebuilding.

Thus, I turn to Kumar (2001), who points out that appropriate relations between different groups, actors and sectors within society, that can manage multiple crisis and disputes without relapse into violence, are imperative for peacebuilding. Furthermore, Kumar emphasizes that these relations can emerge from *outside* formal political structures. Since it can be argued that through the work undertaken by civil society actors in Iraqi Kurdistan, relations between groups in society are addressed, it might be

that appropriate relations are emerging outside formal political structures in Iraqi Kurdistan. Hence, a second answer to the final research question is that peacebuilding might not be a goal of civil society actors, yet it can be a consequence of the work conducted by them. However, this rests ultimately upon the level of leadership, if 'political will' is to emerge.

### *VII.2. Theoretical and Methodological Implications*

The methodology applied in answering the research questions of this thesis is qualitative and explorative in character. The primary sources consist of material from interviews and participant observation, gathered during five weeks of field research in Iraqi Kurdistan. The limitations to the primary sources rest foremost in the short time frame in which they were gathered. I believe a longer stay in Iraqi Kurdistan, with the aim of conducting an ethnographic fieldwork, could illuminate further valuable information. This could be on the subject matter of the relations between civil society actors and the authorities. I would suggest that in-depth interviews with less organized civil society actors other than NGOs would enhance the quality of this study. This would gain deeper knowledge of local civil society actors and their relations to the socio-political structures pointed out in this study. Additionally, interviews with key actors within the authorities, and individuals that have power within the structures pointed out in this thesis, are vital for a true understanding of the effects from the legacy of conflicts. And consequently, of what needs require satisfaction for peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Hence, the weakness of the data is also due to the fact of the limited number of interviews conducted, and mostly with persons that can be categorized as one homogenous group based on their age, sex, career and social status. Moreover, participating in a project that addresses relations between communal identity groups, such as the peace promotion project in Kerkuk, could be of interest for further exploration of peacebuilding within the context of Iraqi Kurdistan. Although, this was the intention during the field research, however the ongoing conflict made this an issue of security, and I was not able to enter Kerkuk because of the violence.

The theoretical approaches in this study were chosen for their relevance to the research questions, hence, ultimately because they highlighted different aspects of the socio-political context of Iraqi Kurdistan. The study draws upon a broad theoretical base, from several academic disciplines. However, would other theories highlighted other factors, and as such come to a different conclusion? Again, for the purpose of gaining a ‘thick’ understanding of civil society and peacebuilding in Iraqi Kurdistan, another theoretical approach might have been more productive. Yet, this area of research is still largely unexplored; as such this explorative case study contributes with explanations of social consequences from the legacy of conflicts in Iraqi Kurdistan. The study highlights relations between social actors, and points to aspects that are of relevance for further research on Iraqi Kurdistan. Additionally, this study illuminates issues of significance for peacebuilding, which can be of relevance for broader generalizations to war torn societies.

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